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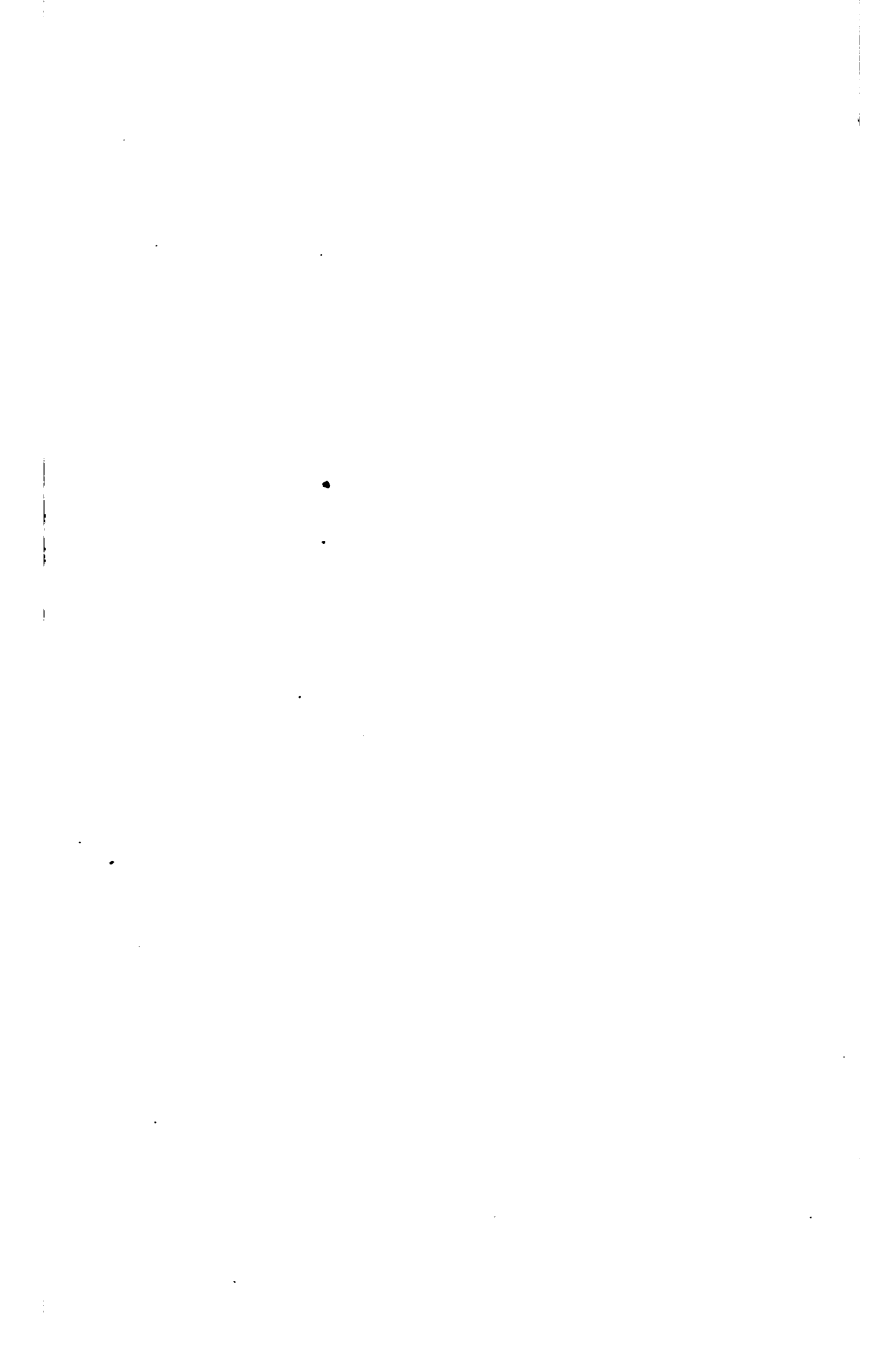
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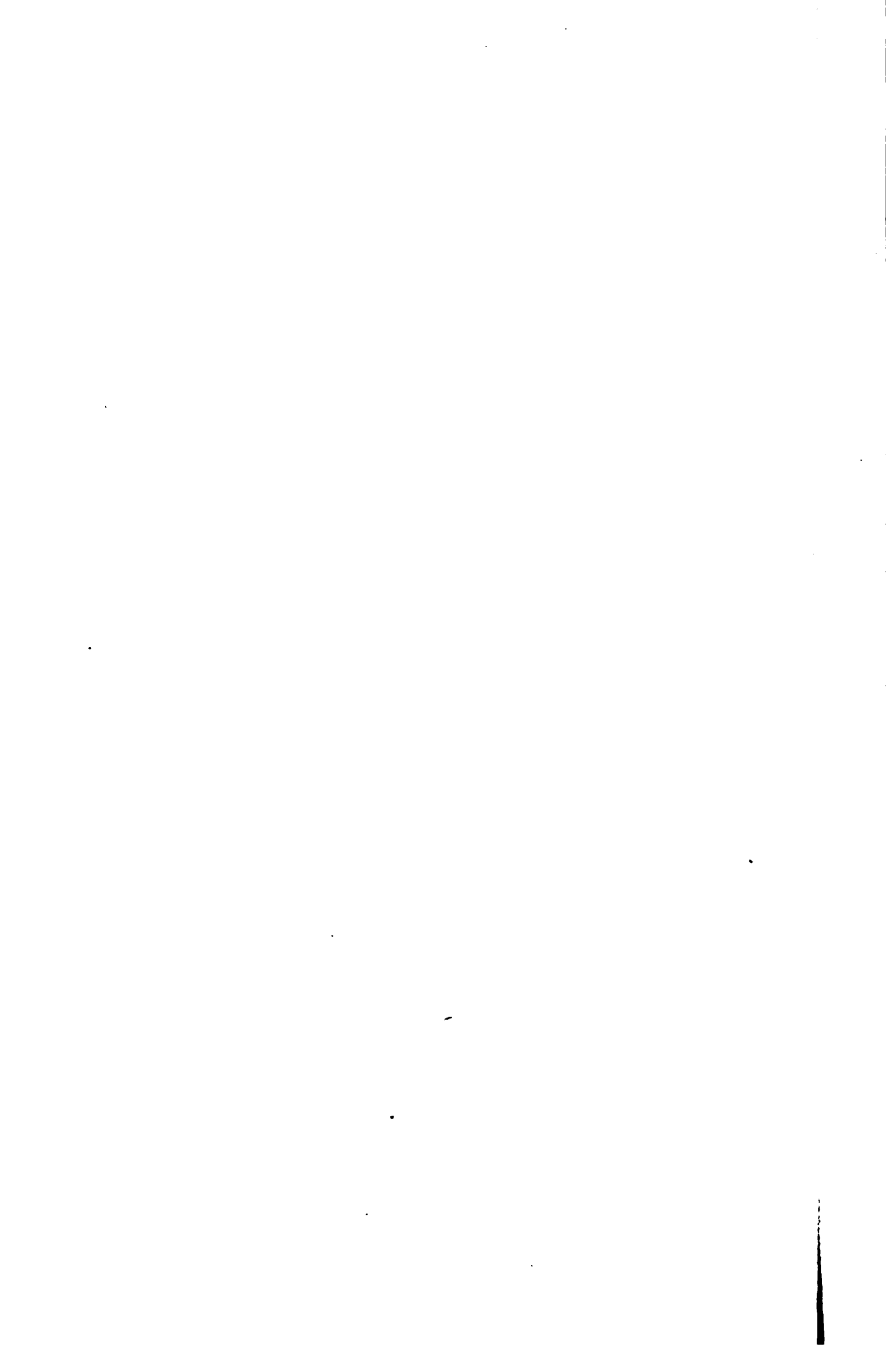
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**SOCIALISM
AND PERSONAL LIBERTY**



SOCIALISM AND PERSONAL LIBERTY

BY
ROBERT DELL

“

“If ye learn to walk in the perfect law of liberty,
ye shall do well.”

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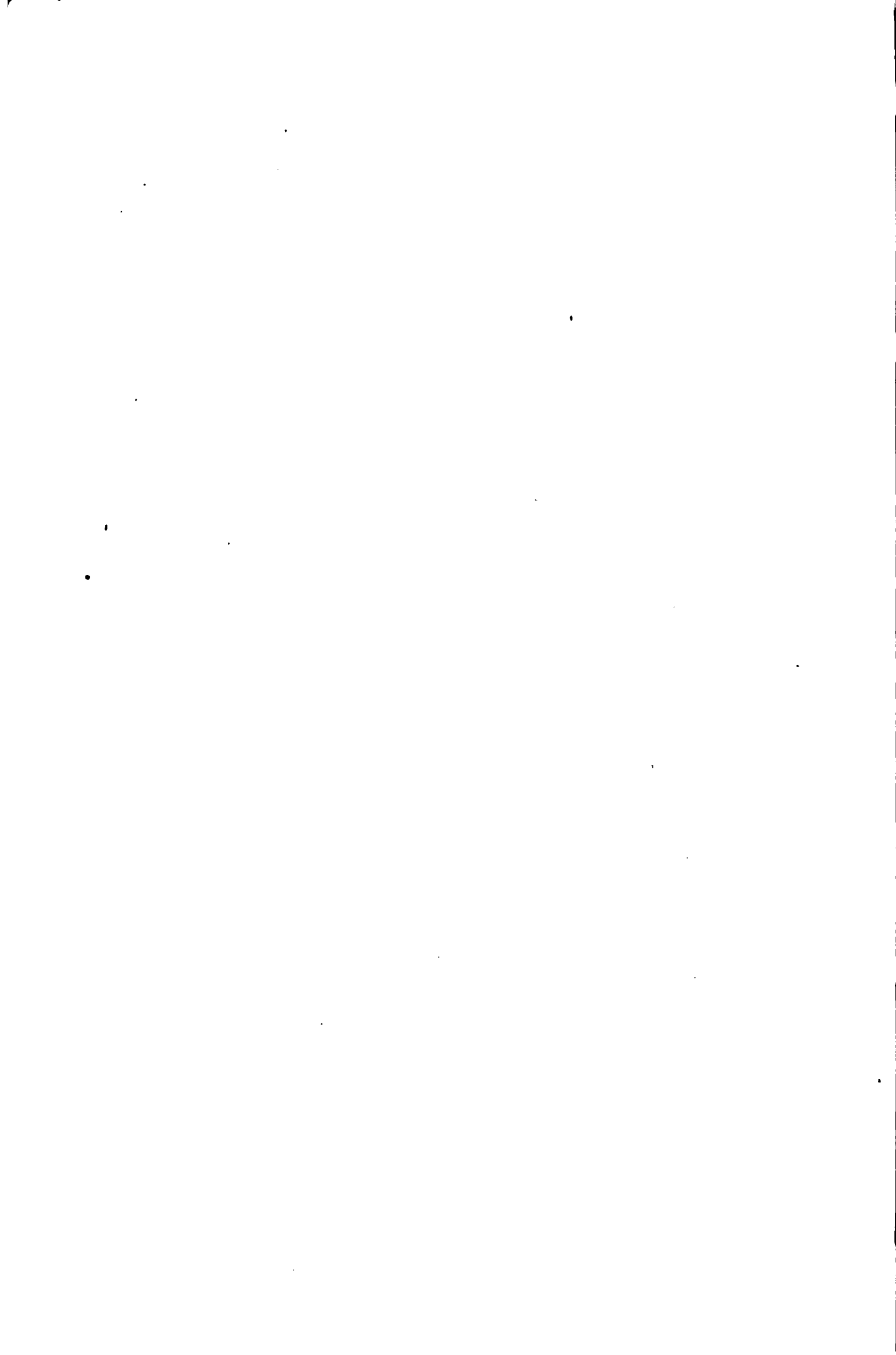
NOTE

READERS of *My Second Country* will find that the opinion that I expressed in that book about the dictatorship of the proletariat as a method of transition from capitalist to Socialist Society is modified here. The reasons for that modification, arising from the experience of the dictatorship of the proletariat in Russia, are explained in the chapter on the subject.

I would warn the reader that the descriptions of various Socialist systems given in the present book are necessarily very summary and incomplete and need to be supplemented. It is not my purpose to give a complete exposition of Socialist theory, nor would that be possible within the limits of a small volume. All that I have been able or have tried to do is to touch on the various theories merely in their relation to the particular question of personal liberty.

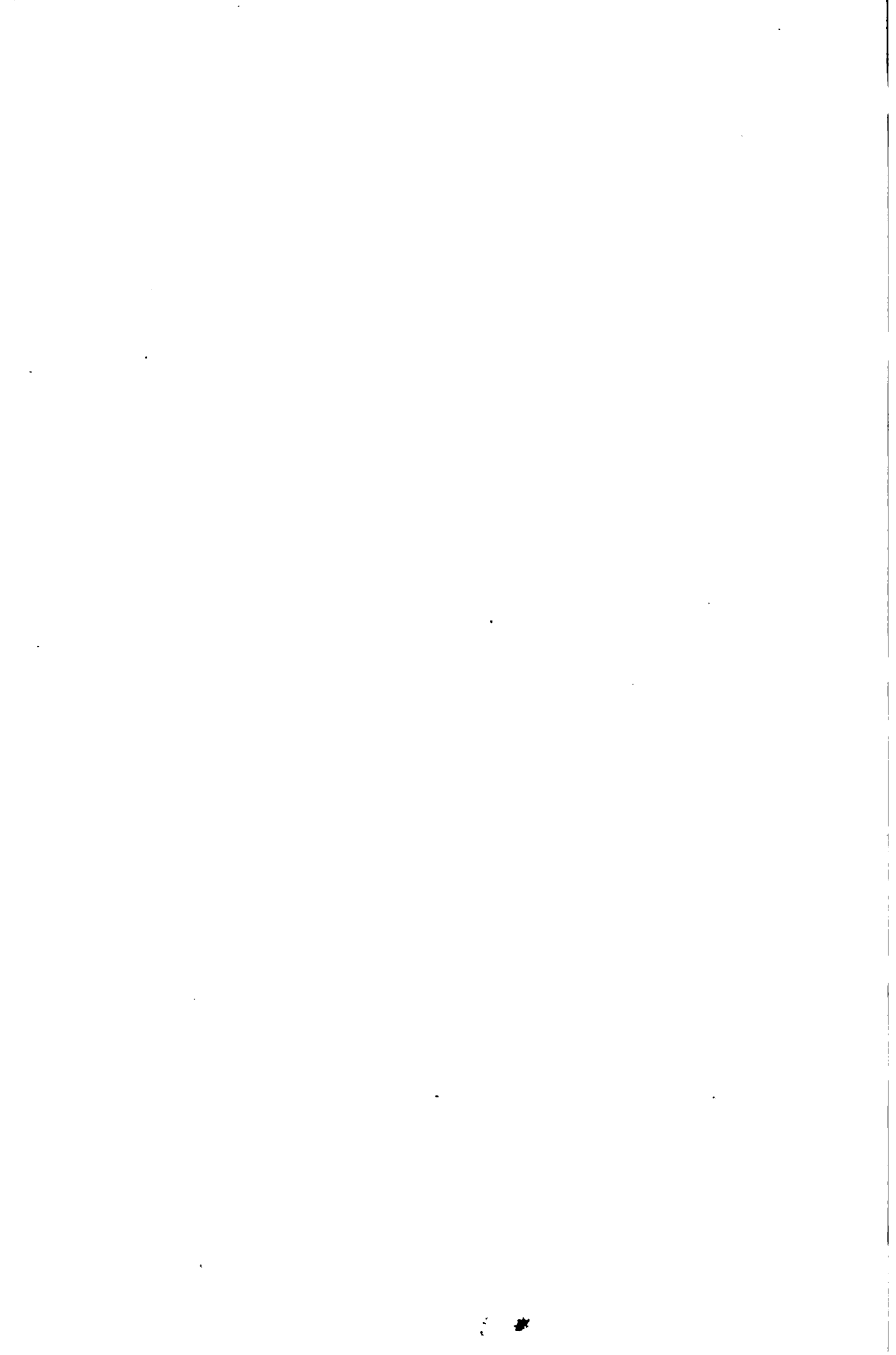
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SOCIALISM AND PERSONAL LIBERTY

CHAPTER I.

THE CONDITIONS OF PERSONAL LIBERTY.

ONE of the greatest obstacles to the progress of Socialist ideas is the fear that Socialism would destroy personal liberty. The objection is not met by pointing out that for the large majority of mankind personal liberty does not really exist in present economic conditions. That is true; but the fact that it is true is one of the strongest reasons for altering the conditions. Socialism is not presented in a very attractive guise by the argument that it would be no worse than the present social system. A prisoner would, no doubt, be gratified by the news that he was about to be transferred to a more comfortable prison where the food was better and more abundant, but he would not be aroused to the same enthusiasm as if he were told that he was about to be set free. The enthusiasm for Socialism now felt by a minority of the workers will spread to the large majority only when they are convinced that Socialism is really a path to freedom. "The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains," but they want to be sure that they will not merely exchange their chains for others of a different pattern.

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Too many Socialists even gladly admit that Socialism and personal liberty are incompatible. Nothing has done more to damp enthusiasm for the Russian revolution than the discovery that personal liberty has been suppressed in Russia. It is possible, of course, to point out that existing conditions in Russia are not necessary consequences of a social revolution; that Russia was of all European countries the least suited to a Socialist experiment; and that the great difficulties arising from its backward state of economic development and the ignorance and barbarism of the majority of its population have been increased by foreign interference. But our "pure" Communist friends will have no such excuses. They hold up the present Russian system as the only possible Socialist system and the ideal for every other country to aim at. A prominent member of the Communist Party of Great Britain wrote to me in 1920 that he quite agreed with a remark of mine that "the servile State was no imaginary danger," but for his part he would welcome it. I have, however, usually found that the apostles of "iron discipline" tacitly assume that it will be exercised by themselves and imposed on others.

This strange hatred of liberty for its own sake ignores reality. For, as Henri Barbusse has said, "the human reality is the individual" and an attempt to base a social order on the ignoring of that fact would be Utopian, for it would run counter to a fundamental tendency of human nature.

X "Every collective organisation of men must come
What does socialism do this?

back to the individual man, be quickened by the individual life, and respect individual autonomy to the fullest possible extent."* The desire for liberty is a fundamental tendency of human nature. A man that does not care whether he is free or not is not normal. The desire for liberty may be crushed out by generations of submission to authority, as it is bred out of the caged bird, but it is never entirely bred out of the human heart. Even in men born slaves it is dormant and can be awakened. Of what use, we are sometimes asked, is liberty to a starving man? Obviously of no use at all, since nothing is of any use to him but food. But, although man cannot live without bread, he does not live by bread alone. One of the worst infamies of our existing social system is that so many people are preoccupied so exclusively by the necessity of getting their bread, and the constant uncertainty as to whether they will get it or not, that they cannot concern themselves with anything else. Such people exist: they can hardly be said to live. If they were offered enough to eat and drink for the rest of their lives at the price of certain restrictions on their liberty, they might well accept the offer. But, when once they were relieved from anxiety about their daily bread, they would demand liberty. Many modern free workers are less well fed and housed than were mediæval serfs or American slaves; but both serfs and slaves eventually demanded their liberty. Many negroes in the

and must be in any social order

* *La Lueur dans l'Abîme*, p. 72. Paris: Editions Clarté, 1920.

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United States live in worse material conditions than their slave great-grandfathers, but not one of them would go back to slavery.

The desire for liberty is not an exclusively human instinct; it exists among all the higher animals. A wild bird caught and caged has greater security than in freedom. It is in no danger of dying of cold or hunger, or of falling a prey to a hawk. But, in the effort to get free, it will beat its wings against the bars of the cage until it breaks them and perhaps kills itself. It prefers death to slavery. We shall make a mistake if we attempt to base any social order on the assumption that the love of liberty is less deeply rooted in the nature of men than in that of birds.

We must, then, start with the individual, but we cannot end with him, for we have perforce to consider him in his social relations with other individuals. To quote Henri Barbusse again:—

“The pure anarchist doctrine . . . right as it is in revolting against certain anti-individualist forces, is only destructive and negative. . . . It is impossible to base calculations on the figure: one. The idea of liberty by itself has no dimensions.”*

Liberty becomes positive only when the individual is regarded in his relations with society, that is, with the totality of individuals. Absolute personal liberty is in the nature of things impossible, except so far as opinion is concerned, since several absolute liberties cannot exist together. The liberty of each individual is necessarily limited

* *La Lueur dans l'Abîme*, p 73. Paris: Editions Clarté, 1920.

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by that of the others. But it does not follow that any and every interference with personal liberty is permissible in the supposed interest of the collectivity. Experience has shown that the real and ultimate interest of all is to secure to each the maximum of liberty, or, in the words of Henri Barbusse, "to use a much more concrete expression, the minimum of constraint." And it is possible to define the minimum of constraint.

The irreducible minimum is such constraint as may be necessary to prevent an individual from so using his liberty as to interfere with the liberty or the rights of others.

No expression of opinion can interfere with the liberty or the rights of others. For that reason liberty of opinion alone can and should be absolute. The basis of liberty of opinion is not any supposed natural right, nor any certainty that, if opinion be free, the truth will always prevail. Perhaps the truth prevails in the long run—I think it does—but it is sometimes a very long run. The ground for giving absolute liberty of opinion is simply the fact that nobody is infallible, not even the proletariat or the people collectively. The claim to have the right to suppress opinion is, in fact, a claim to infallibility, and the suppression or persecution of opinion is justifiable only on the part of persons believing themselves to be infallible, or to be the representatives of an infallible organisation.

The Catholic Church is quite right, from its point of view, to refuse liberty of opinion. Professing,

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as it does, to know the absolute truth about religion and morals—which means, in effect, about nearly everything—it would fail in its duty if it tolerated error. Its theologians are, therefore, reasonable and logical when they teach that error can be tolerated only from motives of expediency—that is, in plain English, when the Church is not strong enough to persecute successfully. Error, they say, is religious or moral or intellectual poison which can be insidiously instilled into the minds of the faithful. The flaw in the analogy is that poison can be recognised with certainty, whereas error cannot be. However strong our convictions, we must always admit the possibility that we may be mistaken. At best, our convictions are extremely probable hypotheses; they can never be certainties, even if we are ready to die for them, for there is no certainty in this world, whatever there may be in any others. If, therefore, we attempt to suppress an opinion, we run the risk of suppressing what may, after all, turn out to be true and even of inestimable value. And it is better on the whole to run the risk of tolerating a harmful opinion than that of suppressing a beneficial one.

That is the experience of the past. The persecuted have more often turned out to be right than the persecutors. Moreover, it is so difficult to be quite sure that one is actuated solely by concern for the truth in suppressing an opinion that one dislikes. Too often, however unconsciously, persecutors have confused concern for the truth with

concern for their own vested interests, which a particular opinion threatened. That element is not entirely absent from Catholic intolerance, for it is evident that the whole clergy, from the Pope downwards, have a strong vested interest in Catholicism. Being human beings, they must be unconsciously influenced by it, just as lawyers, doctors, and every other body of men with corporate interests cannot help being biassed in regard to any proposed change that touches them. So any Government that suppresses opinion hostile to itself may think that it is considering only the public welfare, but is certainly influenced to some extent by consideration for its own position.

A majority is no more infallible than a minority and, therefore, no more justified in refusing liberty of opinion. The fact that an opinion is held by an overwhelming majority, even amounting almost to unanimity, is no proof that it is true. On the contrary, although minorities are not always right, those that are right are always in a minority to begin with. For new opinions are always held at first by a minority, and some new opinions are right. It is precisely the opinions that are held by small minorities and seem to the majority blasphemous, or immoral, or dangerous to society, that need to be protected. Liberty of opinion is the most precious of all liberties, for it is concerned with the one attribute that raises man above all other animals—the human reason.

(In fact, even the pure anarchist does not deny that absolute liberty, except in matters of opinion,

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is impossible. He objects to the use of any constraint, because he believes that, when all constraint is done away with, individuals will voluntarily restrain themselves and respect the rights and liberty of others. There is an element of truth in the anarchist theory. It is because of the law that offences come: the mere fact that an action is forbidden makes it attractive to normal people. Perhaps the most effective method of diminishing vice would be to make virtue illegal. It is for this reason that persecution, unless it is carried to the length of extermination, usually advances the cause of the persecuted. When it does so, that is no sort of evidence that the cause is a good one. Bad causes have had as many martyrs as good. Nevertheless, although it is probable that, in the case of civilised peoples, the less government, the fewer laws, and the less constraint there are, the better people will behave, we have not yet reached a sufficiently high level of civilisation to do away with constraint altogether.

Certain questions are, of course, raised by the application of the principle of personal liberty, as I have defined it, to particular cases. One of those cases is that of children. Any interference with the supposed rights of parents over their children is sometimes denounced as an infringement of personal liberty. The most extreme advocates of parental rights would hardly maintain that parents have the right to treat their children exactly as they please—to ill-treat them systematically, for example. But the doctrine

that a child belongs to his parents is too common. It is sometimes met by the opposite doctrine that a child belongs to the community. A child belongs neither to his parents, nor to the community : he belongs to himself. And the liberty of a child should be respected—his future liberty. It is the business of the community to see that it is respected and to defend it, if necessary, against the parents. Theoretically, for example, it would be justifiable to forbid parents to give any religious teaching to their children, on the ground that it is taking an unfair advantage of a child to prejudice his mind in advance at an impressionable age by imposing on him opinions as if they were facts. Practically, of course, such a prohibition would be absurd, if only for the reason that it could not possibly be enforced. But it is possible to make the schools neutral, as the French say, in matters of religion, and quite justifiable. To allow no religious teaching in schools, even if some parents desire it, is a permissible constraint. For it prevents to that extent parents from interfering with the liberty of their children by depriving them of the freedom to make their own choice, when their intellectual development enables them to do so. That is true of many other forms of interference with the liberty of parents in dealing with their children, which is no more absolute than any other liberty and is limited by the liberty of the child. Until the child becomes old enough to defend and exercise his liberty, it is the duty of the community to defend it.

CHAPTER II.

THE NECESSITY OF ECONOMIC FREEDOM.

THE conception of personal liberty set forth in the previous chapter is that of all liberals, but liberals make the mistake of assuming that it can be realised merely by the absence of legal restrictions on liberty. They do not take into account the fact that certain economic conditions are necessary to make liberty positive. Legal constraint is not the only form of constraint; economic constraint is even more effective. We are all legally free to travel round the world (barring present passport regulations), but most of us are not really free to do so, since we have not the necessary money. "The minimum of constraint for each individual can, therefore, be secured only by equality of economic conditions." Without that the constraint cannot be the same for all. Those in a privileged economic position will be subject to the minimum of constraint and the rest of mankind to the maximum. For example, in present economic conditions, a few are exempt from the natural obligation of working for their living, while the vast majority are subject to it. The few are thus free from a constraint that is naturally universal; the many are not. The few are econo-

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mically independent; the many are not. That fact is recognised in the common phrase: "a man of independent means."

In the Middle Ages it was evident that the many were not free. Guizot said that the feudal system was a confusion of property with authority, but was it not rather a frank and brutal admission of the fact that property confers authority? The ownership of land was the privilege of a particular class and carried with it legal authority. The feudal lord was obliged to assign an allotment to each of his serfs, which they cultivated for their own support and that of their families, but in return the serfs were obliged to cultivate the personal domain of their lord, who could exact from them any other services and any taxes that he pleased. The serfs formed in a very literal sense a proletariat, for they were legally disqualified from owning property and, if they managed to acquire any personal property—in no case could they own land—it passed at their death to their lord.

There was no freedom in mediæval industry. Nobody could set up in any trade without passing through an apprenticeship, which qualified him to be a "master" in his craft. This regulation had originally the admirable object of ensuring that a man should know his trade thoroughly, but in practice it had other objects. When one finds, for instance, that in France it took twelve years to qualify as a maker of glass beads, one is obliged to conclude with Professor Guérard that apprenticeship "was really a form of exacting a premium, in the

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form of free service, in addition to the cash premium which was generally stipulated.* The "varlets" or workmen were not free, for they could offer their services only to a recognised master belonging to one of the gilds and were forbidden to work for the general public. Naturally, the masters could impose their own terms and wages were kept down to the bare subsistence level. In the earlier days of the gilds any varlet could become a master, provided "he knew the trade and had the wherewithal"—that is, the necessary capital, usually, no doubt, small—and passed a practical test by producing a "masterpiece," that is, a specimen of his work good enough to qualify him as a master. But, as time went on, the number of masters in each gild was limited; the masters' sons, who had always been favoured, were alone accepted as apprentices; no varlet had the smallest chance of becoming a master; and the gilds became almost entirely hereditary and nests of privilege and vested interests. Indeed, if one were asked to sum up in a sentence the chief economic characteristic of the Middle Ages, one would say that they were above all the age of vested interests.

There were vested interests in other than economic concerns. Education was an ecclesiastical monopoly. There was no liberty of opinion and repression delayed the progress of science for centuries. The Church, although it sometimes defended the serfs against excessive exactions,

* *French Civilisation from its Origins to the Close of the Middle Ages*, p. 266. London: Fisher Unwin, 1920.

usually sided with the owners of property and did so more and more as time went on. It could hardly do otherwise, since it was itself the largest owner of property. In France, at one time, a third of the land belonged to the Church. Hence the uncompromising opposition of the Church to the remarkable communal movement in France in the twelfth century, which, had it survived, might have changed the whole history of France and advanced the political evolution of Europe by centuries. The popular epics and tales of the Middle Ages suggest that the people recognised their oppressors and that the clergy were rather feared than loved. The villain of most of them is an ecclesiastic, and one gets the impression that for the mediæval story-writer there were three degrees of comparison in rascality: the secular priest, the monk, the friar.

Mediæval civilisation, as Gaston Pâris has shown, died a natural death early in the fourteenth century and was thenceforth only a rotting corpse. The causes, chiefly economic, that broke up mediæval society also produced the Renaissance, when the individual burst the bars of his mediæval cage and soared out into the wide horizon. That wonderful age was the glorious youth of modern civilisation, as the Middle Ages had been its childhood. The cause of personal liberty seemed to have finally triumphed and man rejoiced in his new-found freedom. But the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation once more imposed shackles on his reason, and economic conditions

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forged new bars to confine him. The ownership of property ceased to confer legal authority, but it continued to confer effective power. The fact that it became legal for everybody to own land or any other form of property did not secure property to everybody. Men no longer owned land because they belonged to a particular class, but they belonged to a class because they owned land, for they were still the rare exceptions. In a word, the mere abolition of legal restrictions did not secure economic liberty.

The serfs were freed, but they still had to maintain their landlord out of the fruits of their labour. Instead of the services and taxes that the feudal lord had imposed, a fixed rent was exacted for the use of the land. Moreover, the freed serfs lost in security. The feudal lord had been obliged to assign them land to cultivate for themselves; the new landlord was under no such obligation. He could, if he pleased, refuse to let land to anybody on any terms, and sometimes did so, when he wanted the land for his own pleasure. What greater restriction of personal liberty could there be than the power of a few to deny to others the right to use the land, that is, the right to exist? There can be no economic freedom without access to the land. The owners of the land are as truly the masters of the rest of the community as the feudal lords were the masters of their serfs. If one man owns a whole village, his authority over its inhabitants is no less real, although it is less extensive, than that of a feudal lord over his

serfs. The inhabitants are legally free to leave the village as the serfs were not, but, in fact, they may not be free to leave it, for their circumstances may be such that they would be ruined by moving. Or it might mean leaving homes in which their families had lived for generations. They have not even liberty of opinion, for the owner of a village can expel anybody for his political or religious opinions and has often done so.

The landlord has, in practice, the power to legislate by decree. I knew a village in Surrey, about a quarter of a century ago, where it was a rule imposed by the landowner that every girl should go out to service at the age of fifteen. As the rule was strictly enforced, any family that disobeyed it had to go. Many Parisian owners of house property object to families with more than one or two children—sometimes to any children at all. Some seven or eight years ago one or two large families found themselves homeless because no landlord would let them a tenement. There was a public scandal, and a demand for legislation on the matter. But no legislation could touch it, unless it were enacted that no landlord should refuse to let to a large family in any circumstances. For a landlord has the right to refuse to let without giving any reason at all. And, so long as private property in land continues, he must have that right.

The liberty of certain individuals to own land, therefore, interferes with the liberty of others—indeed, it deprives of liberty all that do not own it. Land is a natural monopoly: its quantity is fixed and



cannot be increased. According to liberal principles, there should be no private monopoly. A liberal that is true to his principles cannot, therefore, support private property in land. There is no way of giving equal access to the land other than that of making it common property. It is impossible to divide it up into small pieces and give everybody a piece. Moreover, since the economic value of the different pieces would vary enormously, such a division would be unjust. The collective ownership of the land is an essential condition of economic freedom.

What is true of land is now equally true of the other means of production: they are private monopolies in the hands of a few. That was not the case when individual production was the rule and a man could start in a trade on his own account with little more capital than sufficed to buy his tools. The invention of machinery and the industrial revolution changed the nature of private property. Small property was replaced by monopolist or bourgeois property in the means of production. The very condition of the existence of bourgeois property is the deprivation of the great majority of any property at all. Limited liability has made huge concentrations of capital possible and it is becoming increasingly difficult for an individual to start on his own account, even as an employer.* Industry is more and more being

* M. Henri Lambert has shown that limited liability has been a much more important factor in creating capitalist—and particularly financial—monopoly than economists have hitherto recognised. (See *Le Nouveau Contrat Social*, by Henri Lambert. Brussels: Maurice Lamertin; Paris: Félix Alcan.)

monopolised by trusts and combines, many of which are international, so that competition between capitalists is greatly diminishing and tends to disappear. An authority so little suspect of revolutionary tendencies as Mr Taft has declared that, unless some restriction were placed on trusts, they would become complete monopolies so powerful that the State would be obliged to take them over, and "Socialism would be the necessary result." Such a system of State monopoly would not be Socialism in the traditional sense of the term, but it is clear that, if the development of the modern capitalist system continues unchecked, it will end in a servile State, controlled by a few plutocrats, such as Anatole France describes in the last book of *L'Ile des Pingouins*. For, as M. Lambert says, our present system is financial rather than merely capitalist. Already the countries called democratic are, in fact, passing more and more under the control of an oligarchy of financiers. That is particularly the case in France and in the United States of America, but it is also, to a great extent, the case in England. It is inevitable, for property confers authority. Rich and poor, as Anatole France says, are equal before the law, which forbids them both alike to sleep under a bridge or to steal bread, but this negative equality hardly affects them both equally. And it is a poor substitute for equality of economic conditions, which alone has any positive value.

"The system of producing and appropriating

products that is based on class antagonisms" is thus, in the words of the Communist *Manifesto* of 1848, reaching "its final and most complete expression." And its final and most complete expression means the extinction of personal liberty for all except the monopolists. Even on the principles of the economic school of Manchester Liberalism the present development of capitalism is indefensible. For the free competition on which the Manchester Liberals insist is being replaced by monopoly. The development has gone furthest in the United States, where the minority of property-owners is very small, their holdings are very large, and the great majority even of men earning large incomes are employees of some vast capitalist concern. A system that makes it possible for a Rockefeller to have an income of £1000 an hour needs changing.

The industrial revolution, by substituting collective production on a large scale for individual production in all the important industries, has enormously increased the number of persons that "have no means of subsistence except in so far as they find work, and find work only so far as the work is profitable to capitalists"—the proletariat. Just as it was believed that everybody would be enabled to have property by the removal of the legal restriction to a particular class of the right to own it, so it was believed that the workman would be given freedom by the removal of the restriction obliging him to work only for certain individuals. The belief was as much a delusion

in the one case as in the other, for in both cases the liberty is negative. The workman, it was believed, would be able to sell his labour in the dearest market, but he soon found that there was no dearest market for him. Before the existence of Trade Unions and collective bargaining, the workman was completely at the mercy of the employer, just as much as he had been in the Middle Ages. The employer could and did exact from him the whole of the value of his production except a bare subsistence wage and, since the supply of labour always exceeded the demand, the workman had no choice between accepting the terms offered him and starvation. There can be no free contract on the part of a man in such a position as that. And such a man is subject to the maximum of constraint, although the constraint is economic and not legal. He cannot be said to have liberty in any true sense of the term.

Trade Unions and collective bargaining have greatly improved the position of the workman, who is now able to exact from the employer a larger proportion of what he produces, but he may still be unable to find any work at all. In that case he is free only to starve. However willing he may be to work, and however competent, he is unable to work, and therefore unable to live, because he has no access to the means of production. Can a man be said to be free if he cannot even gain his bread—that is to say, cannot live at all—without the permission of another man? The private ownership of the means of production gives their owners

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how about unions*

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the power to hold up the rest of the community to ransom. They say, in effect, to the proletariat :

"You shall not work, and therefore shall not live, unless you consent to let me make a profit out of your labour, and if I have no need of you, you shall not work, and therefore shall not live at all."

Of all delusions, surely none is more absurd than the delusion that the capitalist "finds" work for the workman. In fact, the capitalist prevents the workman from working, by refusing him the use of the means of production, unless it be to his own advantage that the workman shall work. Economic freedom will exist for all only if and when everybody can work without asking the permission of anybody else; that is to say, only if and when everybody has access to the means of production. And without economic freedom personal liberty is impossible.

The proletariat does not consist only of manual workers. There is a "black-coated proletariat." The bank clerk, the journalist, the office employee—all, no matter what the nature of their work, that must find somebody to employ them or else starve—belong to the proletariat. All non-manual workers are not destitute of resources other than their earnings and, in so far as they have "independent means," they belong to the bourgeoisie, to which most of them belong by birth and upbringing. For that reason they usually have a bourgeois mentality and do not as a rule realise that their interests are the same as those of the manual workers, against whom they are inclined to side

with the capitalists. Snobbery is to some extent a factor in their attitude. But, whether he realises it or not, a man with a salary of £2000 a year belongs to the proletariat if he has no means of livelihood other than his salary. For his livelihood depends on his employer, who, subject to any agreement, can throw him out at any time. A man in such a position is not free, and that is the position of the large majority of mankind at this moment.

Even liberty of opinion is restricted by existing economic conditions, for liberty of opinion involves a free press and the press is not free in a capitalist society. Once again, the removal of legal restrictions has not secured liberty, for economic restrictions remain. In the days when it cost comparatively little to run a paper, the press was relatively free. Nowadays the cost of a daily paper is so great that newspaper property, like other forms of property, is becoming more and more a monopoly in the hands of a very few men. I suppose that a capital of £500,000 is the minimum on which a London daily paper could safely be started to-day—very likely it would not be sufficient—and how many people can find half a million sterling? Moreover, no daily paper in England or Germany or America can be made to pay, or even to cover expenses, without advertisements, and the advertisers, who are capitalists, naturally show a disposition to boycott papers opposed to capitalism. In France and Italy, where papers are much smaller, they can be run without a loss on circulation alone,

if the circulation be sufficient, or they could before the War, but only on condition that their news service be reduced to a minimum. For it is the news service that costs money. The consequence is that, with very rare exceptions, the whole of the daily press in every country is in the hands of a few rich men. A daily paper can be run in the Socialist or Labour interest only with great difficulty and at an enormous disadvantage.

The "opinion of the press" in every country is, therefore, the opinion of a few rich men, who pay the piper and naturally call the tune. No worker of any class has so little liberty as the journalist. Probably the majority of journalists sympathise rather with the Left in politics than with the Right, but they have to express their employers' opinions, not their own. And, what is even worse, they often have to cook the news in their employers' interest. For the influence of a newspaper is exerted more through its news than by its leading articles, which a large proportion of its readers probably never read. The most effective form of propaganda, as all the belligerent Governments discovered during the War, is the skilful manipulation of news. The number of papers that are really honest in their news is now very small in any country. The news published in the press, with a very few honourable exceptions, is deliberately tendencious. That is not the same thing as mere bias. Nobody can escape from bias, not even a newspaper correspondent, however anxious he may be to tell the truth. Nor is it the same

thing as inaccuracy. Perfect accuracy is unattainable, especially in the conditions of rapidity required by a daily paper. Sometimes news is simply suppressed, when its publication might be injurious to the interests of the proprietor of the paper, its advertisers, or the capitalist class in general. Sometimes news is invented, as has been the case of so much of the news about Soviet Russia. The exposure by the *New Republic* of the Russian news published in the *New York Times* would have damned that paper for ever, if a regard for truth were still considered to be necessary or desirable on the part of a newspaper. More often news is deliberately coloured. It is easy to give an entirely false impression by skilful omissions and, above all, by mendacious headlines. The latter method is much employed in America, where newspaper proprietors seem to think—no doubt with reason—that most of their readers read only the head-lines.

Mr Upton Sinclair has shown in *The Brass Check* to what depths of mendacity and corruption the American press has fallen. The French press is quite as bad. I know a man who left one of the Parisian news agencies after a few days, because he was asked to forge foreign telegrams. The English press is not yet quite as bad, but it is going rapidly in the same direction. The evil is increased by the tendency towards newspaper trusts and combines. In America, in more than one case, fifty or sixty newspapers are owned by one man, and we see in England an attempt being

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made to form a newspaper trust under individual control—an attempt characterised by no excessive scruple about the methods employed. In these conditions it is a delusion to talk of the liberty of the press. Freedom of the press, like other forms of freedom, can be secured only by destroying capitalist monopoly and giving all equal access to the means of production.

During the last seventy years one attempt after another ~~has been made to find remedies for the evils arising out of the system of capitalist monopoly.~~ Each successive remedy has turned out to be at best a palliative—at worst an aggravation of the disease. State interference in industry was opposed by the Manchester Liberals on the ground that it was interference with personal liberty. It seems now almost incredible that men like Cobden could have thought that the limitation of the hours of labour of women and children in factories was a restriction of the liberty of the women and children. The only liberty that it restricted was that of the employers to make the women and children work as long as they chose. For no factory could be run at all if the workers were allowed to come and go as they pleased—to work two hours one day and ten the next. In any form of society there will have to be regulations in collective production. The alternatives in this particular case were regulation by the employers and regulation by law. In fact, the limitation of the hours of labour gave the women and children a liberty that the employers had denied them.

Nevertheless, it is true enough that State interference in industry is a bad thing, but it is unavoidable in capitalist conditions. The consequences of leaving capitalist conditions to produce their natural results unchecked were so appalling that the public conscience would no longer tolerate them. So the State has had to interfere more and more to modify those consequences. Law after law has been passed in the hope of mitigating evils that are inherent in the system of capitalist monopoly. Each law has led to a new evil and made necessary yet another law to correct it. The enormous number of laws with which all civilised countries are now afflicted is the sign of a diseased society. A healthy society needs and has few laws. We are in a vicious circle and there is only one escape from it. We must cease to tinker with the symptoms of the disease and deal with its cause.

Socialism—the socialisation or collective ownership of the means of production—is now the only alternative to private monopoly. That has not always been the case, and would not be the case in all conceivable economic conditions, but it is the case in existing conditions. Modern Socialism is not, then, based on any metaphysical conception of a community with an entity and a life of its own apart from those of the individuals that compose it, or on any supposed superiority of the community over the individual. It is not based on any belief in the ethical advantages of co-operation as opposed to competition, or on the fatherhood of God, or on

few laws needed in a healthy society
Soc. concentrates powers into the hands
same as Capitalism. Welfare state
Less control and income, less liberty

the brotherhood of man, or on any religious or moral or philosophical doctrine. It is simply an induction from facts. In the words of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels: "The theoretical conclusions of Communism are in no way based on ideas or principles that have been invented or discovered by this or that would-be universal reformer. They merely express, in general terms, actual relations springing from an existing class-struggle, from an historical movement going on under our very eyes."

It is not, however, enough to socialise the means of production in each country, for natural resources are not equally distributed. The monopolisation of the natural resources of any particular part of the globe by any race or nation is as bad as any other monopoly. Equal access to the means of production therefore involves complete freedom of communications and exchange. On the one hand every individual should be free to move about the world as he pleases and to settle anywhere without let or hindrance, provided he conforms to the local laws and regulations. On the other hand the international exchange of commodities should not be restricted by import or export duties, embargoes on imports or exports, or any other means. The suppression of political and economic frontiers—which does not mean that of territorial boundaries—is essential to economic freedom.

CHAPTER III.

DEMOCRATISM.

ONE of the characteristics of the moment is the reaction against the parliamentary form of government and even against democracy as such. In France anti-parliamentarism has been prevalent for more than twenty years—the reactionary anti-parliamentarism of the Royalists and the revolutionary anti-parliamentarism of the Syndicalists. In England there can be no doubt that a large proportion of the working class no longer believes in the possibility of realising its hopes by parliamentary action. In every country the same tendency exists more or less. Anti-parliamentarism is not necessarily anti-democratic—our existing parliamentary institutions are not the only conceivable form of democracy—but there is now a strong reaction against democracy in itself. It is in part the consequence of the Russian revolution, which has encouraged the belief that an energetic minority can impose its will by force on the majority—as no doubt it can in some countries and in certain circumstances. The attractive prospect of a short cut to Socialism has led many of the adherents of the Third International to become, consciously or unconsciously, definitely anti-democratic. Mr

Bernard Shaw seems to be among those that have given up democracy in despair. Mr Hilaire Belloc, who is not a Socialist, is another, but he, a true Frenchman, carries the anti-democratic reaction to its logical conclusion and advocates a strong monarchy, hereditary or elective. In fact, Mr Belloc has arrived at Bonapartism, which is the political counterpart of his religious creed.

The reaction against democracy, if it continues and grows, can lead only to Bonapartism, or something like it. It is perfectly true that all the great movements in history have been the work of minorities, but Mr Hyndman is right in saying that Socialism can be permanently achieved only when the majority is ready to accept it, although, in my opinion, he goes too far in saying that the majority must also understand it. An attempt to impose Socialism by force on the majority will fail, not only because force has no creative power, but also because the ruling minority will be demoralised by the exercise of authority. "No man is good enough to be another man's master"—not even a Communist bureaucrat. The tyranny of a minority, or even the despotic rule of a single individual, would be excellent, if there were any means of selecting the minority or the individual capable of exercising authority without being demoralised thereby. There are no such means, because there are no such human beings. Oligarchy and despotism are as Utopian as anarchism; all alike ignore fundamental tendencies of human

nature. The most practical and workable system is to give to the majority the decision of such few questions as cannot be left to each individual. It is not perfect, but it is the least imperfect. Industry will be more successful in a Socialist society if the manager of a factory is elected by the workers than if he is appointed by a Government. And a country in which the workers have not reached a sufficiently high level of civilisation to make that possible is not fit for Socialism.

Nevertheless, it is true that parliamentarism is a failure. In my opinion it cannot last; the signs of decadence are evident. And its failure is not surprising, for its vices are inherent in the conception on which it is based—the conception to which the French revolutionary Syndicalists have given the name of democratism. We owe the theory of democratism to the French and American Revolutions. For the individual sovereign they substituted the Sovereign People, not realising that the new idol would be as dangerous to liberty as the old, for all sovereignty is incompatible with personal liberty. “Government of the people for the people by the people”: that is the formula of democratism. But the people cannot govern directly. The inhabitants of a village might manage their local affairs by means of a popular assembly, but not the millions of inhabitants of England or the United States of America, or even of London or New York. So they have to choose representatives to manage their affairs for them. And to those representatives is transferred the sovereignty of

the people. So the Sovereign People becomes in practice the Sovereign Parliament—omnipotent and endowed with universal competence, with the power to legislate on any and every question. And above the Sovereign Parliament is the effective organ of the Sovereign State—the Executive Government, subject in England and France (but not in the United States) to the control of Parliament in the sense that the latter can dismiss it, but in fact omnipotent in administration and nearly so in foreign policy. The French Constitution explicitly, and the British Constitution traditionally, give the Executive the power to bind the Sovereign People, without their knowledge or that of their representatives, to treaties by which they are bartered like cattle.

The political freedom of the democratists thus resolves itself in practice into the freedom to choose once every few years between the least of two or three evils in the form of candidates presented by various political caucuses. In the interval the Sovereign People has no sort of control over its representatives, and in England its representatives have less and less control over the Executive. The functions of the House of Commons are reduced to little more than those of talking and of registering the decrees of the Government. The private member is deprived of all initiative and the right of putting questions to Ministers is almost the only right left to him. The House of Commons no longer even dares to dismiss a Government. The French Chamber of Deputies is more independent, although

the French system is far from being really democratic. In reality the sovereignty of the Sovereign People has become little more than the right to decide every few years with what sauce it shall be eaten during the ensuing period. And there is so little difference between the sauces.

Of course it would be possible to devise a more democratic parliamentary system than the French or British. The Swiss system, for example, is more democratic—it provides for popular initiative and referendum, the Executive is directly elected by the legislative body, and Ministers are individually, not collectively, responsible to Parliament. But democracy is impossible except in small areas where the elector can always be in close touch with his representatives, and no real control of representatives is possible without the right of recall, which can be effectively exercised only in small areas. Democracy, therefore, involves decentralisation. Direct election should be restricted to small areas—the commune or the ward—and the representatives so elected should send delegates to the provincial or national bodies.

The fundamental vice of democratism is, however, the notion that it is possible for one man to represent another. To the Guild Socialists belongs the credit of having pointed out that fallacy and having proposed a remedy. As Mr Cole says: "a human being as an individual is fundamentally incapable of being represented." He can be represented only "in relation to some particular purpose or group of purposes." The

only satisfactory form of representation is, therefore, "functional representation": that is to say, there must be different representatives for different purposes. We must get rid of "the omni-competent State with its omni-competent Parliament," and divide such of its functions as it is desirable to retain—probably not the majority—among several bodies representing the interests of different groups of citizens or the different interests of all the citizens. It is the application to administration of the principle of the division of labour.*

But, even if political democracy were thus made really democratic, as it is nowhere at present, it would still be a failure. For political liberty and political equality are illusions without economic freedom and economic equality. Rich and poor may have equal political rights by law, but they can never have equal power. Economic power precedes political power and is more real and effective. So long as a minority monopolise the means of production, they will be the real rulers, however democratic the political system may be. Marx and Engels were right in saying, more than seventy years ago: "Political power properly so called is merely the organised power of one class for oppressing another." And political democracy is merely a device for concealing from the oppressed class the fact that it is oppressed. So long as all the resources of a country are owned by a certain number of individuals, the representatives of the people

* See *Guild Socialism Restated*, p. 31 ff. London: Leonard Parsons Ltd., 1920.

will be under the effective control of those individuals. As Anatole France says : " The Penguin democracy did not govern itself ; it was subject to a financial oligarchy which manufactured opinion by means of the press and held in its hand the Deputies, the Ministers and the President. This oligarchy was the sovereign administrator of the finances of the Republic and directed the foreign policy of the country." The character of the peace made by the victorious allied Governments shows how true is this description of political democracy.

The remedy, then, is not a return to monarchy or oligarchy, but the destruction of that instrument of oppression, the State. The alternative to political democracy is industrial democracy. We must get rid of political power properly so called—of the government of men—and substitute for it the administration of things. In that administration the final decision will rest with the majority because it must—failing the appearance on this earth of a superman or supermen free from all human weaknesses. But that does not imply the sovereignty of the people, which means in practice the sovereignty of half the people plus one. The tyranny of a majority is as bad as that of a minority or an individual. It is the whole conception of sovereignty or authority that is wrong. The powers of the various functional representatives would be limited to their respective functions, and there would be no body of men with sovereign and universal powers. The individual would be subject to no constraint other than that necessary

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to prevent him from interfering with the liberty and rights of others, if he attempted to do so. Coercion of minorities or individuals would be resorted to only in the last resource when all means of persuasion had failed. Freedom of association would greatly reduce the occasions of coercion, for there would be no jealousy of "a State within the State," and the existence of autonomous groups would become possible. With the disappearance of the Sovereign State, a country would become, like a town, or a county, or a province, an administrative area in the federal organisation, and everybody would be a citizen of the world, that is, of the place where he happened to live. Only in such conditions will personal liberty be really possible. In the words of Engels: "Society, which will reorganise production on the basis of a free association of producers with equal rights, will relegate the whole machine of the State to its proper place—the museum of antiquities, along with the spinning-wheel and the bronze hatchet."

✓ The cult of the omnipotent State, which has been a consequence of democratism, has been disastrous to personal liberty. The personification or mythicisation of the State or the "Patrie" is a modern form of idolatry—it dates in France from the Revolution—and mystical patriotism is a modern religion. It is not the natural affection of a man for his native city—like the love of Pericles for Athens—but the worship of a mythicised "England" or "France" or "Germany," which is neither the territory nor the people, but a personi-

fied abstraction. A country is even endowed with a "moral personality." The most amusing example that I know of this aberration occurs in M. Paul Deschanel's *Gambetta*, where M. Deschanel solemnly declares it to be the duty of a nation "to shed the last drop of her blood for her children." It would be interesting to hear from M. Deschanel what blood a nation has to shed except that of "her children" themselves, and what would be left of the nation or "her children" when the last drop of that had gone. Unhappily, the consequences of this superstition are not merely rhetorical. It has led to the sacrifice of the "children" in order that they might not be deprived of a mother.

The religion of patriotism is one of the greatest obstacles to Socialism, for its hold on the proletariats of the different countries has enabled them to be persuaded that it was their duty to fight one another in the interest of their respective masters. If we do not want another generation of young men to pass through the fire to the Moloch of the State, we must overthrow the idol, break down his altars, and disperse his priests. And let us take care to put no other idol in his place. Already there are disquieting symptoms of a tendency to personify and mythicise the proletariat, to which some people seem disposed to sacrifice the proletarians.

Democratism also menaces personal liberty by its claim that the majority is infallible and has the right to impose its tastes and opinions on the minority. Has not the "people," we are asked, the right to say whether it will have alcoholic

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drinks? What is really meant is: Has not the majority the right to prevent the minority from having them? The only reasonable solution is to allow those that want them to have them and those that do not to go without. If people get drunk and make themselves a nuisance to others, they should be dealt with. It is in the United States of America that majority tyranny has been carried furthest. The apostles of "hundred per cent. Americanism" are trying to impose a single standard of conduct and opinion—by force, if necessary. The ideal of "hundred per cent. Americans" is that all should dress alike, look alike, think alike, speak alike and act alike. The enemies of liberty have been encouraged by their success in the matter of Prohibition to embark on a campaign for a whole series of repressive measures intended to enforce their own conceptions of religion and morality on everybody. The chief organisers of the campaign are, I am informed, the Methodist Episcopal and Baptist Churches, the Women's Christian Temperance Union and the Young Women's Christian Association. They seem to be liberally supplied with funds—enormous sums were spent on the Prohibition campaign.

One of the objectives is the suppression of tobacco. Cigarette smoking is already illegal in the State of Kansas. In some States the works of authors considered by the Puritans to be immoral are banned; in others it is a penal offence to wear what is called in America a "one-piece bathing suit." The attempt is being made to repress

prostitution by persecuting prostitutes and their customers, who are alike liable to imprisonment in certain States. Since it is not even necessary that there should be a pecuniary consideration to constitute the offence, the law could be, and no doubt will be, used to penalise any extra-matrimonial sexual relations. The opportunities for blackmail that it affords are so obvious that they need not be insisted on. The latest move is a proposal to close on Sundays all places of amusement, public galleries, libraries and every other public institution, except, of course, the churches ; to suppress all Sunday trains, trams and other public conveyances, except immediately before and after the hours of church services ; to forbid Sunday newspapers ; to make all games and sports on Sundays illegal ; and to prevent motoring, as far as possible, by regulating the sale of petrol. One wonders why it is not proposed to force everybody by law to attend church at least once a week : no doubt that will come if the Lord's Day Alliance succeeds in its present modest programme. It hardly seems possible that it can, but it appears that the Alliance has plenty of money behind it, and the success of the Prohibition campaign shows what money can do in American politics.

Prohibition and Sabbatarianism are, however, trifles in comparison with the outrages on private liberty committed in the United States both by the authorities and by gangs of middle-class ruffians such as the members of the " American Legion." And, although the dogma of the infallibility of the

herd is not yet enforced in the European "democracies" so thoroughly as in the "sweet land of liberty," encroachments on personal liberty are becoming more and more serious in every European country. We have had the system of *lettres de cachet* introduced into England for the first time in our history by a Liberal Government during the War, and we have now a political police, using all the habitual methods of such a police, including forgery and the *agent provocateur*. Men are sent to prison in England merely for expressing Communist opinions or selling Communist publications. The Emergency Powers Act confers on the Government powers that the Stewarts would have envied and that, in the opinion of such men as Charles James Fox, would justify revolt. The public sense of liberty has been blunted by the habit acquired during the War and by the monstrous doctrine that it is a duty to submit to any act of tyranny sanctioned by a "democratically elected" House of Commons. Even if our political system were democratic, encroachments on personal liberty would be no more tolerable. Indeed, if one had to make the choice of evils, perhaps the tyranny of an autocracy or an oligarchy would be less intolerable than the tyranny of the herd.

CHAPTER IV.

SPURIOUS SOCIALISMS.

DEMOCRATISM has produced a spurious form of Socialism, variously known as State Socialism, Reformism, and, in France, as *étatisme*, the most accurate title for which would perhaps be State Capitalism. According to this theory the various industries would be nationalised one after the other by being taken over by the political State and converted into State monopolies. Reformism, if I am not mistaken, originated in England and it has gained a greater hold in this country than in any other, thanks in particular to the Fabian Society. But some of its leading supporters have considerably modified the theory or entirely abandoned it. In France a Reformist programme was first put forward in 1896 by M. Millerand, now President of the Republic, in a speech delivered at a congress of the "Possibilist" Socialist party, to which he then belonged, at Saint Mandé, a suburb of Paris. Hence it became known as the Saint-Mandé programme. The term "Reformist" is now very loosely employed, especially by the Russian Communists and their supporters in other countries, who apply it indiscriminately to everybody outside the Third International.

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Indeed, it has become with them a mere term of abuse. More generally it is used of Socialists that believe it possible to bring about Socialism by peaceful means. That is an accurate enough use of the term, if by peaceful are meant constitutional means, for State Socialism is the only form of Socialism that could be brought about by constitutional means. The successive conversion of industries into State or municipal monopolies involves no fundamental change in the structure of society and could be effected by Act of Parliament.

It is the mistaken identification of Reformism or *étatisme* with Socialism, in the classical sense of the term, that has been one of the chief causes of the belief that Socialism is incompatible with personal liberty. Evidently a system of State monopoly would be incompatible with personal liberty. The very condition of its existence would, as M. Emile Vandervelde has said, "be a formidable concentration of power in the hands of the Government." It would, indeed, aggravate all the evils of the omnipotent and universally competent State, which would have the management and control of industry in addition to all its present powers. Political power, far from being abolished, would be enormously strengthened by the transference to its organ, the State, of all economic power. The result could hardly be anything but an oppressive tyranny. Instead of several individual capitalist employers, there would be one collective employer—the State. The wage-

slaves of the capitalists would become the wage-slaves of a bureaucracy. And the new master would be armed with more formidable weapons than the old ones. Strikes would become revolts against the State and would be repressed as such. Although the mines in England in 1920 were only "controlled" by the State, the Government used public money for propaganda against the miners' strike and employed all the resources of the State to defeat it. If the State becomes an employer, it will defend its interests like any other employer.

State monopoly, moreover, would mean the stifling of individual enterprise and initiative. We have examples of State monopolies in industry; they are not encouraging. The owner of a monopoly, having the consumers at his mercy, need take no trouble to find new methods or new styles, or to keep up the quality of the products. Monopoly could result only in stagnation and conservatism and that has, in fact, been the result of it in every country where it has been tried. There are, of course, certain natural monopolies and certain industries—railways, for example—that are of the nature of public services, but even they should not be under the control of the political State or managed by a Minister and a Government department. There are few countries where even the postal service is decently managed; I know of no State telegraph system that gives so many facilities as the Atlantic cable companies, and the State telephones in nearly every country are a byword. No political body should be allowed to

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have anything to do with industry—with production, distribution or exchange. So long as the political State lasts, its functions should be strictly limited to political matters. There should be a complete separation between the organ of authority and the organs of management—between the government of men and the administration of things—until Socialism has got rid of the government of men and only the administration of things remains. Reformism or *étatisme* not merely reproduces all the vices of democratism, but intensifies them. It would pile on to the already overloaded Parliament and municipal authorities the additional task of managing the industry of the country or controlling its management. The task would be impossible and the whole control would pass into the hands of an omnipotent bureaucracy. It would be worse than the capitalist system.

But Reformism is not Socialism, as it was understood by Marx and Engels and has been understood by all Socialist writers for the last seventy years. As Jules Guesde has said: "The nationalisation of private industries by the bourgeois State is not Socialism and has nothing to do with Socialism." M. Emile Vandervelde is now a Minister of the King of the Belgians and has adopted what is in fact a Reformist policy, but he is of the same opinion as Jules Guesde. Dr Inge, Dean of St Paul's, said in a lecture in February 1914 that "Socialism may be conceived as an omnipotent bureaucracy directed by a small number of capable

men of the type of Napoleon or Pierpont Morgan.” To this M. Vandervelde replied :—

“ Is it necessary to repeat that, if such were Socialism, it would have no more energetic opponents than Socialists ? Such a system of generalised *étatisme* would maintain the wage system, maintain the authority of the employer, maintain the relations of subordination existing between the ruling class and the class of the workers. Socialism, on the contrary, implies a radical and essential change in those relations. It is not a question of replacing private capitalism by State capitalism, but of replacing both private capitalism and State capitalism by the co-operation of the workers, masters of the means of production and exchange. And such a transformation, which suppresses the distinction between capitalists and workers, is nothing less than a revolution.”*

And, summing up the difference between Socialism and Reformism, or *étatisme*, M. Vandervelde says : “ *Étatisme* is the organisation of social labour by the State—the Government. Socialism is the organisation of social labour by the workers themselves, grouped in recognised associations.”

Jules Guesde and M. Vandervelde are in complete agreement on this point with Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. I have already quoted the passage in which Engels declared that the State would be relegated to the museum of antiquities.

* *Le Socialisme contre l'Etat*, p. 167. Paris : Berger-Levrault, 1918.

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Bakunin considered Marxist Socialism to be too centralising and I am disposed to agree with him. For reasons that will be mentioned presently, it is possible that the Marxist system, strictly applied, would involve something too much like a bureaucratic State, but never would Marx or Engels have admitted that State monopoly was Socialism. They never ceased to declare that Socialism must destroy the State and replace it by "the free federation of all men." So much was this the case that they opposed the nationalisation of the railways or the mines by the bourgeois State and have been followed in that regard by the strict Marxists. Kautsky opposed the proposal to nationalise the mines in Prussia. Jules Guesde and the French Marxists voted against the State purchase of the Western Railway of France in 1910. Guesde, in his pamphlet, "Les Services publics et le Socialisme," declares that "public services can only be dangerous to the party of labour and its aims" in a bourgeois State: "the revolution *first*, that is to say, the political and economic expropriation of the Capitalist class; public services *afterwards*, because, after the fusion of classes into a single class, services really public will be possible." And in his controversy with the French Reformists, Guesde maintained that nationalisation, "far from simplifying expropriation by the proletariat, by creating a certain amount of public property, is only a danger to the workers, because it strengthens the enemy, the bourgeoisie, and weakens the working class, whose movements it paralyses."

Experience has shown that Jules Guesde was right in saying that nationalisation has nothing to do with Socialism and will not simplify the task of Socialists. The railways were nationalised in Tsarist Russia, and have long been nationalised in Germany, Italy, Belgium, Switzerland and most other continental countries. The Saar mines were nationalised in Prussia some years ago. The sale of alcoholic drinks was a State monopoly in Tsarist Russia; in France the manufacture and distribution of tobacco and matches are State monopolies and pawnbroking is a municipal monopoly. Telegraphs and telephones are nationalised in nearly all countries. Not one of these nationalisations has improved the position of the proletariat or done anything to promote the cause of Socialism.

The dangers of which Jules Guesde speaks would, however, be greatly reduced by what is called in France "industrialised nationalisation," which puts the industry concerned under the joint management of representatives of the Government and of the workers. Such a system has been proposed for the mines by the Miners' Federation of Great Britain, but the scheme is still a little too *étatiste*, for it provides for the appointment of a Minister of Mines. Any nationalised industry should be completely autonomous, financially and otherwise, as is the Swiss Federal Railway, and entirely free from direct Government or bureaucratic control. There is no Minister of Railways in Switzerland. The Swiss Federal Railway is, in fact, run like any great industrial undertaking

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belonging to a private company, with the important difference that it has no dividends to pay to shareholders and can, therefore, use all its profits for the improvement of the service. Such public services as exist—the posts, telegraphs and telephones, for example—should be removed from the control of Ministers and Government departments and put under autonomous management of the same kind as that proposed for the mines. The same system should be applied to municipal services. Any proposed nationalisation should be considered simply on its merits, not regarded as a “step towards Socialism,” for that it cannot be. And in no case should any industry be nationalised other than a natural monopoly or a public service.

Reformism, then, is merely an extension of the functions of the political State and is fundamentally opposed to economic Socialism. It is not the only spurious form of Socialism. There are all the social theories based on some religious or moral principle, most of which are anti-individualist and would be fatal to personal liberty. One of them was feudal Socialism, as Marx and Engels called it, which attributed all the evils of modern society to personal liberty and Protestantism, and recommended a return to an imaginary past—a Middle Ages of romance, in which perfect happiness was secured under the beneficent influence of the feudal system and the Catholic Church. The mediævalists still linger among us in the form of “Christian Socialists” of the Catholic type. Some years ago their

activities were revived by the Encyclical *Rerum Novarum* of Leo XIII., which was a mere summary of the commonplaces of mediæval moral theologians, in which a system of individual production was taken for granted and peasant proprietorship recommended as a solution of the land question. The activity was, however, short-lived, for Rome took fright at attempts to apply the principles of Leo XIII. to modern conditions, and even the French and Italian "Christian Democratic" movements were condemned and suppressed, although they advocated nothing more dangerous than political democracy and mild "social reforms." Both Pius IX. and Leo XIII. formally condemned "that monstrous system called Communism, Socialism, or Collectivism," as well as "liberalism." The Roman theologians recognised that Socialism and philosophic liberalism are alike fatal to authority. Moreover, although the Catholic Church would no doubt tolerate a system of State monopoly, if Church property were left intact, it will never accept Socialism, since the socialisation of the means of production involves the expropriation of Church property with the rest. The Catholic form of pseudo-Socialism is based on the mythicisation of the community, which, like the Church, is endowed with a mind, a memory and various other personal faculties. It is merely anti-individualism.

There are excellent people that propose to create a Socialist society, or what they believe to be one, by a change of hearts. Apart from the objection that the process might last till doomsday, no change

of hearts could affect economic conditions. The evils of an economic system are due to economic causes, not to human wickedness. The capitalist system is not bad because the capitalists are bad people—they are no worse than anybody else, and if a workman became a capitalist, he would behave exactly as the others do. Indeed, we know by experience that that is the case. The “self-made” man is often the most exacting of employers. And, even if everybody suddenly became entirely disinterested and altruistic, it would not necessarily follow that a perfect social system would be arrived at, or even a better than the present one. For the most disinterested and altruistic people may make mistakes. Well-intentioned ignorance and stupidity have done more harm in the world than wickedness.

No satisfactory social order can be based on religious or moral principles. Religious principles in particular, are, as Henri Barbusse has said, “at once too personal and too sovereign.” Faith, as he goes on to say, introduces a fixed precept—a dogma—“which makes reason useless, puts it out of court, imposes itself despotically by supernatural means. There is an antagonism between faith and reason; they destroy each other even when they are agreed.”* If it is futile to attempt to reconcile Socialism with historic Christianity, it is equally futile to try to deduce it from pre-historic Christianity. Jesus had and could have no ideas at all on economic questions. Believing

* *La Lueur dans l'Abîme*, p. 69.

as he did that a reign of perfect justice was on the point of being established on earth by a miraculous intervention of Jahweh, he was not concerned with the future of humanity, which was thus provided for, nor with economic or social problems which were on the eve of receiving a drastic and final solution. Hence his advice to his followers to take no thought for the morrow, to cease from toiling and spinning, and to leave their heavenly Father to feed and clothe them.

It is often said that the Christianity of the Sermon on the Mount has never been tried. But it has. The immediate followers of Jesus strictly obeyed his precepts, formed themselves after his death into a community, put all their goods in common, ceased to do any work, and waited for the coming of the Kingdom. As it did not come, they got into difficulties when their common resources were exhausted, and the early Christian Communism came to grief. It bore no resemblance to the scientific Communism of Karl Marx. How difficult it was to get rid of the habit of not working among primitive Christians is shown by St Paul's denunciation of it. Another attempt to revive prehistoric Christianity was made by St Francis of Assisi, who ordered his followers to earn and own nothing, to live by begging as Jesus had instructed his apostles to do, and to have nowhere to lay their heads. During the life of St Francis his marvellous personality made the movement a great religious force, but within a comparatively short time after his death the Franciscans had

become a public nuisance and the very name of friar a byword. As Christianity survived by discarding most of the teaching of Jesus or explaining it away, so the Franciscan Order survived by abandoning the essential principles of the Rule of St Francis. Modern Franciscans do not live by begging and have roofs under which to lay their heads. The injunction of St Francis that they were not even to own collective property is evaded by vesting the property of the Order in the Pope ; and those Franciscans that still observe the rule that they must never carry money are accompanied by a layman who carries it for them, just as Tolstoi transferred his property to his wife.

The confusion of Socialism with prehistoric Christianity has led to the strange notion that Socialism is an ascetic creed whose ideal is universal poverty. Socialism is rather hedonist than ascetic : at least it aims at happiness for everybody in this life, whereas Christianity tells people to look for happiness in another, which has taken the place of the Kingdom that did not come. Poverty, far from being holy or blessed, is for Socialism one of the worst of evils. If people would only grasp that, they would not talk nonsense about the inconsistency of a rich man, who, although he is a Socialist, does not divest himself of his riches and, presumably, distribute them to the poor. When a Socialist is a rich man, there is a strong presumption of his sincerity, and the best use he can make of his wealth is to spend as much of it as possible on propagating Socialist ideas. A wealthy

Socialist should not set an example of luxury and ostentation, because his money can be better spent in the way just indicated, but it is ridiculous to suppose that it is contrary to Socialist principles to enjoy a good dinner or wear a pretty frock, or that a Socialist should lead the life of a hermit in the desert. The silliest charge that can be made against a Socialist is that of not "practising what he preaches," as if anybody living in one economic system could "practise" another.

Such sentimental notions, which are inspired by the spirit that led to Communist settlements and similar Utopian schemes, arise from ignorance of the fact that Socialism is a purely economic theory that has nothing to do with any religious, moral or philosophical beliefs. It is a scientific hypothesis founded on reason, not on faith or feeling. Therefore, we cannot make common cause with a so-called Socialism deduced from religious principles, since it must inevitably be a dogmatic creed which neither springs from economic conditions nor can be adapted to them. That does not mean that we will not work with a Christian or adherent of any other religion if he accepts Socialism on economic grounds. But a Roman Catholic that tries to be a Socialist will find sooner or later that he will have to choose between his Socialism and his Church. There can be no reconciliation between the principle of authority and its opposite. A French or Italian Catholic that joined a Socialist society or publicly advocated Socialism would probably be refused the sacra-

ments at once. In Protestant countries the Church is obliged to be more tolerant, but, if and when the social revolution comes, the whole power and influence of the Church will be used against it. For the Catholic Church is as completely identified with the capitalist system as it was with the feudal system in the Middle Ages. The great religious orders are capitalist corporations. One of the causes of the influence of the Jesuits in the Church is an economic one—the great wealth of the Society of Jesus. What is true of the Catholic Church is true in varying degrees of all the Churches: they are part and parcel of the capitalist system. In a speech at the American Inter-Church Conference in 1920, Mr Roger W. Babson said : “ Religion is the best guarantee of our investments.” He was quite right.

CHAPTER V.

MARXIST SOCIALISM.

KARL MARX and Frederick Engels were the founders of modern Socialism, which may be said to date from their *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, published in 1848. In his preface to the English translation of the *Manifesto* published in 1888, Engels explains why they used the term "Communism" in preference to "Socialism." The name "Socialist," he says, was given in 1848 to the adherents of various Utopian systems, and "whatever portion of the working class had become convinced of the insufficiency of mere political revolution and had proclaimed the necessity of a social change, that portion then called itself Communist." In course of time, however, it was found that the term "Communism" was easily misunderstood and taken to mean the entire abolition of all private property, even in tooth-brushes and pocket-handkerchiefs, and the sharing of all things in common. The term "Socialism," therefore, came into more general use and by 1888, as Engels' preface shows, the two terms had become synonyms, but "Socialism" was much more used. A more accurate term than either is "Collectivism," which exactly expresses the idea of collective ownership of the

means of production. It was, if I am not mistaken, coined by Bakunin ; at any rate it was the term that he preferred and he called himself a " Revolutionary Collectivist." The three terms are synonymous and connote the same economic theory ; they have been used interchangeably by all the eminent Socialist writers of the last half century. For instance, the French Marxist, Jules Guesde, in one of his best-known pamphlets on Collectivism, explains that by " Collectivism " he means the " scientific Communism " of Karl Marx.

The term " Communism " has now been revived by the Russian Bolsheviks and is used by the members of the Third (Communist) International to distinguish themselves from other Socialists. The wisdom of its revival is doubtful, for the term is still open to the misconceptions that caused it to be dropped and it is, in fact, generally misunderstood. Few people realise that by " Communism " is meant what has hitherto been popularly called in all the Western countries " Marxist Socialism." One can hardly open a newspaper or talk about " Bolshevikism " to a person unversed in Socialist theory and economic terms without realising that. This objection is so strongly felt by French Socialists that, when the French Socialist Party affiliated itself to the Third International, it asked and obtained permission to retain its old title. In England the term " Collectivism "—preferred by the man whose anti-*étatiste* and libertarian opinions caused his expulsion as an anarchist from the First International—has come to be applied by many

people to State Socialism or Reformism, perhaps because it is the favourite term of Fabian writers. This misuse of a useful term is unfortunate, for it has made it also open to misunderstanding when used in its proper sense. In these circumstances it seems preferable to use the term "Socialism."

Marxist Socialism or Communism does not mean the entire abolition of private property, but only that of private property in the means of production — of monopolist or bourgeois property. This could be shown by innumerable quotations from the works of Marx and Engels. It will be enough to quote two sentences from the *Communist Manifesto* of 1848: "The distinguishing feature of Communism is not the abolition of property generally, but the abolition of bourgeois property." And again: "Communism deprives no man of the power to appropriate the products of society: all that it does is to deprive him of the power to subjugate the labour of others by means of such appropriation." Socialism would, indeed, extend private property in the products of labour, for at present the great majority of people have none to speak of. The entire abolition of private property is not merely Utopian: it would be mischievous and an unjustifiable interference with personal liberty. Private property in the means of production interferes with the liberty of others; private property in the products does not. No man's life would be complete without some personal belongings, each with its own particular association.

To abolish private property entirely would be to diminish personality, for a man's belongings are part of himself. The entire abolition of private property is a religious rather than an economic theory. It is, of course, the principle of religious orders and is an attempt to realise "holy poverty"—which has not always succeeded, for the right to use common property may result in practice in very comfortable conditions. A system of common property in all things is called "Utopian Communism" to distinguish it from the "scientific Communism" of Marx and Engels.

As has been said, Marxist Socialism is not *étatiste*, but the opposite. It is necessary to insist on this fact, since an extraordinary ignorance of Marxism is general in England. For instance, the brilliant writer that uses the pseudonym "A Student of Politics," in an article on the British Labour Party published in the *Times* in February 1921, attributed the State Socialist tendencies of the Parliamentary Labour Party to Karl Marx. "The party," he said, "will never do anything with this German-Jewish tin-can of State Socialism tied to its tail." I agree with him that it is most unfortunate that the Labour Party is so saturated with Reformism and wastes so much energy on demanding all sorts of nationalisations, except the most important—that of the land. But Reformism or State Socialism is not "German-Jewish." Although it has unfortunately been exported to other countries, it is a genuine British product and the Marxists, whatever their nationality,

are among its strongest opponents. Everybody has not time to read *Das Capital*, which, moreover, is not easy reading, but "A Student of Politics" might, in the course of his studies, have opened *La Guerre civile en France*. There he would have found Marx declaring that the State is "a public force organised for social servitude," the "engine of the despotism of a class," and that it must be replaced by "the free federation of all men." He would find Engels saying in *Anti-Dühring* that the State is "the organisation of the exploiting class . . . to maintain by force the exploited class in the conditions of oppression demanded by the existing method of production," and pointing out elsewhere that the State has not always existed and "will inevitably collapse" when classes disappear, that is to say, when a Socialist society comes into being. This idea permeates all the writings of Marx and Engels and of every Marxist Socialist—Paul Lafargue and Jules Guesde, Kautsky and Emile Vandervelde, no less than Lenin himself. There is no country in Europe where the great "German-Jewish" economist, who belongs to the world, has had so little influence as in England, and no country where State Socialism has had so much. In Germany theoretical Reformism is almost unknown among Socialists; the German "State Socialists" are to be found among the disciples of Bismarck, not among those of Marx.

~~Theoretically, Marxist Socialism is entirely compatible with personal liberty. Its aim is the transformation of existing society into "a great economic~~

co-operative" by the socialisation of the means of production. Nothing could be more libertarian than the definition of Socialist society in the Communist *Manifesto* of 1848: "an association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all." This definition starts from the individual: all are to be free because each is free. Nevertheless, as I have already said, there is a centralising tendency in Marxism which might, in practice, result in a system dangerous to personal liberty. Kautsky, indeed, speaks of the "centralisation" of the means of production, and that phrase is used in the basis of the Second International, which also pledges the parties affiliated to the International to the "conquest of political power by the proletariat," that is to say, the dictatorship of the proletariat. It is plain that a single association or "co-operative" composed of a whole nation would lead inevitably to a strong central administration, for a whole people cannot directly manage production. It would appear, however, from what Marx said about the Paris Commune, that he had no objection to the choice of a smaller unit than the nation. There is nothing in the Marxist theory necessarily incompatible with the existence in a Socialist society of various forms of association and voluntary combinations. Indeed, as M. Vandervelde has said, the organisation of labour by the workers is inconceivable without "the individual and collective self-help of the working class, a vast organic development of trade unions, co-operative societies and association

in every form." * The only alternative would be the monopolisation of production by an omnipotent State, and to that Marx was definitely opposed.

Marxism, like all forms of Socialism antecedent to Guild Socialism, preserved the democratist error of concentrating all functions in the hands of a single body of men. But the greatest danger of the Marxist system, in my opinion, is the method that it proposes for the transition from a capitalist to a Socialist society, which will be dealt with in the next chapter. Marx was not infallible, although there seem to be people nowadays that imagine him to have been so. His theories were hypotheses and never pretended to be anything else; he never intended them to be erected into dogmas. There has been an immense contribution to the study of Socialist theory since Marx's works were published and many modifications of his theory have become necessary. It would be strange if that were not the case, seeing that he has been dead for forty years and conditions have greatly altered. Nothing could be more contrary to the scientific spirit of Marx than the tendency of those that call themselves "pure" Communists to impose his economic hypotheses as dogmas. Marx would be surprised and disgusted to find himself transformed into the founder of a religion. Like the adherents of most religions, the faithful of the Third International take the doctrines of their founder that appeal to them and discard the others. The doctrine on which they insist the most is that of the dictator-

* *Le Socialisme contre l'Etat*, p. 69.

ship of the proletariat, which has taken in their creed a place out of all proportion to its importance and has become the end instead of the means. One notices that the remedy proposed in many ~~Communist publications~~ for the evils of existing society is no longer Communism, but the dictatorship of the proletariat.

On the other hand the "pure" Communists fly in the face of Marx's teaching about the conditions necessary to a successful Communist experiment. Both Marx and Engels considered that an essential condition of the social revolution in any country was that the proletariat should be the majority of the population. Nothing could be more contrary to all their ideas than a social revolution by a *coup d'état* of a minority. "All previous historical movements," says the Communist *Manifesto*, "were movements of minorities, or in the interest of minorities. The proletarian movement is the self-conscious, independent movement of the immense majority, in the interest of the immense majority." From that attitude Marx and Engels never swerved. They would, therefore, certainly have held that a Communist experiment should not have been attempted in a country like Russia. Communism was possible, in their opinion, only in a highly industrialised country. They would have been equally opposed to the view that a revolution should be made by the Communist Party, still more to a dictatorship of that party over the proletariat. "The Communists," they said, "do not form a separate party opposed to other working-class

parties. They have no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole. They do not set up any sectarian principles of their own, by which to shape and mould the proletarian movement." The Third International is opposed to all other working-class parties; it is nothing if not sectarian; and it attempts not merely to shape and mould the international proletarian movement, but to dictate to it even in matters of local policy. The leaders of the German Communist Party had to resign from its Executive in February 1921, merely because they expressed the opinion that the policy of the Executive of the Third International in Italy had been unwise.

Marx and Engels believed that the workers must effect their own emancipation. The "pure" Communists, who propose to effect it for them, are in every country led principally by bourgeois intellectuals—mostly of the literary profession—many of whom are disillusioned sentimental pacifists or former emotional patriots. The Third International has more hold on the Socialist parties, which contain a large bourgeois element and are usually under bourgeois leadership, than on the purely proletarian organisations. In Italy, for instance, in 1921, the "pure" Communists got 34 per cent. of the votes at the Congress of the Socialist Party and only 22 per cent. at the Trade Union Congress. Yet the Italian Trade Unionists are the most revolutionary in the world and their confederation is officially pledged to Marxist Socialism. It is also significant that a large pro-

portion of the recruits of the Third International are men that became Socialists during the War, who have very little economic knowledge and whose Socialism is to a large extent a vague desire for revolution, arising from a natural disgust with existing society. In every country except Russia itself the great majority of the Socialists with any great competence in economic matters—and especially the majority of Marxist scholars—are outside the Third International.

In fact, the policy of the Third International is in contradiction with the most fundamental principle of Marxism—the economic or materialist interpretation of history. The soundness of that principle is more and more demonstrated as time goes on. Of course, it can be exaggerated—perhaps Marx himself exaggerated it a little. The economic factor is not the only one in history. But it is the predominant factor, as is natural enough, seeing that the need of finding the means of subsistence is the primary need of humanity. According to Marx, Socialism arises naturally from existing conditions. Economic causes are leading inevitably to Socialism, just as they led to the break-up of mediæval society, to the Renaissance, to the individualist revolt and the industrial revolution. The Socialist theory merely expresses in general terms actual relations springing from an existing class-struggle, and it can be practically applied only where the class-struggle has reached a certain stage and taken a certain form.

The class-war is not a doctrine or an opinion or a

policy : it is a fact. It is the inevitable consequence of the existence of different classes with conflicting interests. It has always existed. There was a class-war between the feudal lords and the serfs or the mediæval Communes. From time to time it became violent, as in the famous "Jacquerie" in France and the insurrection of John Ball in England, and in such incidents as the revolt of the people of Laon in 1116 against their bishop and feudal lord, whom they hacked to death. But the class-war has become acute only in modern industrial countries and, the larger the proletariat and the stronger their Trade Unions, the more acute it becomes. It is, indeed, making the capitalist system unworkable. Trade Union regulations, being purely negative, are sometimes a hindrance to production, but they are necessary in existing conditions to maintain the workmen's standard of living. Employers complain, with some reason, that they ~~can no longer manage their businesses ;~~ ~~workmen,~~ on the other hand, ~~are becoming~~ more and more unwilling to work to earn profits for employers. Both consider only their own interests. It is futile to blame either side. The only solution is to alter radically the economic system and get rid of classes and thus get rid of the class-war. The alternative is deadlock. That is why, on Marxist principles, the industrial countries are ripe for Socialism.

CHAPTER VI.

DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT.

MARX and Engels conceived the conquest of political power by the proletariat to be the first step towards Socialism. Political power properly so called was, in their opinion, "the organised power of one class for oppressing another." The proletariat was to seize political power—by what means does not matter—in order to become the ruling class—the State—but only for the purpose of sweeping away the conditions that produce classes and with them their own supremacy as a class. This is the famous collective and impersonal dictatorship of the proletariat, of which so much has been heard of late. The phrase is not very accurate, for dictatorship, strictly speaking, means the arbitrary rule of a single individual. But, since Marx and Engels regarded political power as in itself oppressive, it was only straining to some extent the sense of the term "dictatorship" to apply it to the conquest and exercise of political power. The phrase "dictatorship of the proletariat" does not occur in Marx's published works. He used it once—in 1875—in the following passage of a private letter :—

"There lies between the capitalist and Communist society a period of revolutionary

transformation of one into the other. This period has a corresponding political period of transition, during which the State can be nothing else than a revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat."

But the idea expressed by the phrase was an essential part of Marx's theory and is already to be found in the Communist *Manifesto* of 1848. The dictatorship of the proletariat—its organisation as the ruling class—was not, then, in the view of Marx and Engels, the final form of Socialist society, but a temporary measure to effect the transition from one society to another.

According to this conception the proletariat is to oppress or dominate the bourgeoisie temporarily, until the latter is extinguished, not by the extermination of the bourgeois, but by their conversion or that of their children into workers, so that there will be a single class, that is to say, no classes at all. The exact form of the so-called dictatorship might vary in different countries. For instance, although in Russia at present the bourgeoisie is excluded from the franchise, Lenin declares that to be due to the particular conditions of Russia and does not anticipate that "the impending proletarian revolution in Europe will, all or for the most part," be necessarily accompanied by such a restriction of the franchise. There was no such restriction in the Paris Commune, which Engels cited as an example of the dictatorship of the proletariat. It is true that, as Lenin says, a great part of the bourgeoisie had fled from Paris to Versailles. The persons

legally disfranchised in Russia are such as "employ hired labour with a view to profit," not those that were bourgeois before the revolution, as were nearly all the Communist leaders. In practice, no doubt, the franchise is denied to counter-revolutionaries and, after all, in the course of a revolution, revolutionaries and counter-revolutionaries can hardly work together. Royalists were not admitted into the National Convention during the French Revolution. Far too much has been made of this unimportant matter by opponents of the Bolsheviks.

The primary purpose of the dictatorship of the proletariat, as Marx and Engels understood it, was to break up the existing State machine. Hence the Paris Commune was an example of it, because it destroyed parliamentarism, the army, the bureaucracy, and "that parasitical incubus, the State." The Parisian workers invested the State "with a revolutionary and temporary form" in order to destroy it. That Socialism is impossible and cannot even begin to be possible until the existing State machine is smashed, seems to me evident. The Bolsheviks were quite right in dissolving the Constituent Assembly. For Socialism, to quote M. Vandervelde, "is nothing less than a revolution." That does not necessarily mean that it can be brought about only by violence. Theoretically, a revolution might be quite peaceful. But the question is: not whether Socialists wish to use violence, but whether the capitalist class will use it to prevent Socialism. I think it will, if it can. It has already resorted to organised violence in

Italy and in the United States. Both the actual revolutions in Russia were accompanied by little violence and bloodshed—less than in the case of most revolutions in history. Most of the violence has occurred since, and has been mainly by way of self-defence against counter-revolutionary violence encouraged and subsidised by foreign capitalist Governments. However much a man may dislike violence, he must use it in self-defence, if it be used against him, unless he agrees with Jesus, St Francis, Tolstoi and the Society of Friends that the use of force is never justifiable in any circumstances. For my part, although I recognise the possibilities of passive resistance—which is not at all the same thing as turning the other cheek—I am not prepared to say that it would always be successful, still less to subscribe to any dogma excluding the use of force in all circumstances.

The vast majority of mankind—and of Christians—agree with me in this regard, not with Jesus, St Francis, Tolstoi and the Society of Friends. They hold violence to be sometimes justifiable. The real opinion of most people on the subject is that violence is all right when it is used on their own side—for example, by the Black and Tans in Ireland—and all wrong when it is used against them—for example, by the German army in Belgium. This is rather too simplist a view. Two must be allowed to play at the game. Ardent supporters of the War, or of the forcible repression of the Sinn Feiners, denouncing the Bolsheviks for using violence, make themselves ridiculous. The Bolsheviks use violence, like

other governments, to repress revolt against their authority, and also use it to achieve what they believe to be the salvation of humanity. They may be mistaken : but the idealist supporters of the War have turned out to have been quite mistaken about its results. If violence is permissible in what a nation or a government believes, rightly or wrongly, to be a good cause, it is permissible in what any other group of people believe, rightly or wrongly, to be a good cause. For a nation or a government is no more infallible than any other collectivity or than an individual. Moreover, no distinction can logically be drawn between international and civil war. Indeed, as Anatole France has said, civil war is usually the more reasonable and therefore the more justifiable of the two, for it is usually fought on an issue that really matters to the combatants, who know what they are fighting about. The civil war are the wars that have had the most satisfactory results. I should say that the English civil war of the seventeenth century was the most justifiable war in our history.

If, however, a revolution is, at least theoretically, possible without violence, it is not possible without unconstitutional methods. The resolution of the Amsterdam Socialist Congress forbidding Socialists to participate in a bourgeois Government was merely the recognition of an obvious incompatibility. Socialists would stultify themselves if they took the responsibility of becoming Ministers of the Crown, and thus assumed the duty of defending it, the Constitution, and the bourgeois State. And,

if a Socialist government tried to expropriate the capitalists by Act of Parliament, the latter would at once resort to unconstitutional action, if they were strong enough. The case of Ulster has shown us that constitutionalists do not hesitate to act unconstitutionally when it suits their purpose. Marx and Engels, then, were right in insisting on the necessity of smashing the existing State machine and on that point every Socialist must agree with them, although Reformists or *étatistes* naturally do not.

Whether the method by which they proposed to achieve that end is the only one, or even the best, is, however, another matter. The dictatorship of the proletariat involves the centralisation of "all instruments of production in the hands of the State, that is, of the proletariat organised as the ruling class." It is true that, when this temporary system of centralised State Socialism has done its work, we are promised, in place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, "an association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all." Nothing could be more attractive to a libertarian Socialist, if he could be sure of that result. But the weak point in the Marxist system is that it fails to show how the result will be obtained, or to give any satisfactory assurance that it will be obtained at all. During the transition period, production is to be "concentrated in the hands of a vast association of the whole nation." That means, in practice, in the hands of a bureaucracy, for a

whole nation cannot manage production directly. It is not easy to see how such a system would develop into the "free federation of all men." It seems much more likely that, when the conditions for the existence of class antagonisms had been swept away, the people in power would find all sorts of excellent reasons for staying in power. "It is perfectly absurd," said Engels, "to talk about a free popular State; so long as the proletariat needs the State, it needs it not in the interest of freedom, but in order to suppress its opponents, and, when it becomes possible to speak of freedom, the State as such ceases to exist." But, in practice, will the State cease to exist? I doubt it very much. It is much more likely to become stronger than ever. A centralised system of State Socialism will never lead to anything, in my opinion, but more and more State and more and more centralisation. And freedom will ~~never be attained by the suppression of freedom.~~ It may be suppressed at first in the interest of the proletariat: it will end in being suppressed in the interest of the Government.

The French Syndicalist, Hubert Lagardelle, hit on the inherent weakness of the Marxist method of transition in his discussion with Jules Guesde at the Socialist Congress at Nancy in 1907. ~~The dictatorship of the proletariat, he said, was as Utopian as the Reformist method, for both attributed to the coercive powers of the State a creative value that they did not possess.~~ That is so. Force may sometimes be necessary, but its results can never be more than negative. It can destroy—and it is some-

times necessary to destroy—but it cannot construct. The dictatorship of the proletariat could, no doubt, “sweep away by force the old conditions of production,” but it could do no more. As Lagardelle said, by whatever method political power were conquered, a Socialist society would not issue ready-made either from an electoral victory or a revolution. It would certainly not issue ready-made from the dictatorship of the proletariat, even when the old conditions of production had been destroyed. And how could a system of centralised State Socialism, which necessarily involves a strong, if not despotic, government, build up “an association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all”? One might as well hope to gather grapes from thorns or figs from thistles.

We are not restricted to speculation about the matter, for we have in Russia an example of the dictatorship of the proletariat in practice. It will be said that the Russian system is not a dictatorship of the proletariat in the Marxist sense of the term, but a dictatorship of the Communist party over the proletariat. That is true now, but it was not true to begin with. And I am disposed to think that the way in which the dictatorship of the proletariat has developed in Russia is the way in which it must inevitably develop everywhere. It shows that Lagardelle was right—that it is an error to attribute a creative value to the coercive powers of the State, and a delusion to imagine that the State can be used to destroy the State. If we begin with centralisa-

tion, we shall go on to more and more centralisation. If we begin by restricting personal liberty, we shall go on to restrict it more and more. If we begin by refusing to speak of freedom, it will never become possible to speak of it. If we begin with the State, we shall never get beyond the State. If we begin with a dictatorship of the proletariat, we shall end with a dictatorship over the proletariat. The evolution of the dictatorship of the proletariat in Russia has been a logical and natural evolution. The Marxist theory that a free Socialist society can be evolved out of a centralised system of State Socialism is about as reasonable as would be the expectation that a caterpillar could develop into a frog or a tadpole into a butterfly.

After the second Russian revolution the Bolsheviks proceeded rigorously to apply all the principles of elementary Marxism—the Marxism of the Communist *Manifesto*. Obviously a collective dictatorship cannot be directly exercised by the proletariat, which, like the present ruling class, can rule only through representatives. Marx and Engels contemplated a democratic system, at least within the proletariat itself. The Bolsheviks began by establishing one. For nothing could be more democratic than the Soviet system, about which so much nonsense has been talked, and which has been made a fetish by some and a bogey by others. It resembled the system of the Paris Commune. “The Commune,” said Marx, “was to be, not a Parliament, but a working body, legislating and executing at the same time. . . . Universal

suffrage was to be the means whereby the people, organised in Communes, was to seek out, for its gigantic business, workers, foremen, book-keepers, just in the same way in which employers use their individual suffrage." Marx's approval of this system suggests, as I have said, that he did not object to geographical decentralisation, for the system of the Paris Commune was essentially decentralising geographically. But it concentrated all power in the hands of the "working body," which was to be at once legislative and executive, and to have the control and management of industry, in addition to the enormous powers already possessed by Parliaments. It would be difficult to imagine a more cumbersome or unworkable system than that of the appointment of foremen and book-keepers by an assembly already overloaded by unlimited and universal powers.

This was the system at first adopted in Russia, except that the suffrage was occupational instead of being merely residential. There is nothing essentially Socialist in such a system, which was proposed before the War by the French Regionalists for their suggested regional assemblies, which were to be elected by categories of electors, grouped according to their occupation, with an extra group composed of those that had no occupation or did not come within either of the categories. The desirability of such a system is matter for discussion, but there can be no question that it is democratic. The Soviet system is, like that of the Commune, a federal one and has, therefore, the advantage of

limiting direct election to small areas where the electors can be in close touch with their representatives. This was particularly desirable in Russia, since it enabled the peasants, who would be helpless if they were called upon to vote in large constituencies on questions that they could not understand and for candidates of whom they knew nothing, to choose men whom they knew and trusted. The exclusion of the bourgeoisie from the franchise did not make the system undemocratic so far as the workmen and peasants were concerned. The towns were and are, I understand, given a larger representation in proportion to their numbers than the rural districts. That is, no doubt, an infringement of democratic principles, but it is a sensible arrangement in a country where the rural districts are still in a state of barbarism or semi-barbarism. People barely emerging from barbarism are no more fit for democracy than is the nursery. In a country where 80 per cent. of the inhabitants are illiterate and very ignorant peasants, it would be disastrous to allow them to swamp urban civilisation. It was a wise course to give them votes, so that they might learn to use them and their interests might be represented, but so to arrange matters that the urban vote predominated.

The Russian dictatorship of the proletariat was, therefore, organised on Marxist lines. It gave "all power to the Soviets," which were, theoretically at least, as omnipotent and universally competent as the Paris Commune. The Trade Unions, which are the natural organisations to be entrusted with the

control of production, were subordinated to the Soviets, that is, to political bodies. Naturally, the system broke down. The power became gradually concentrated in the central or national Soviet, and then by a natural transition in the Government and the Communist party, and the Trade Unions were reduced to impotence.

In a letter addressed to Trade Unionists, the Communist party said: "The Communist party cannot, in any case, accept the idea that the party should have only the political control and that the economic control should be in the hands of the Trade Unions. This is an echo of the Second International." The Communist party has become an army of bureaucrats—a new aristocracy, to which the proletariat is completely subordinated. According to the last statistical report of the party, of its 604,000 members, 318,000 (53 per cent.) are State or municipal officials, 162,000 attached to the army in some capacity, 36,000 officials of the party, 12,000 Trade Union officials, 6000 State or municipal minor employees, and only 70,000 (11 per cent.) are workmen. It is quite clear who now form the ruling class in Russia.

Soviet control of production no longer exists even nominally. The factories are under the despotic control of the Government, which appoints for each a single manager armed with more arbitrary power than any capitalist employer. The workmen are under military discipline and strikes are illegal. If they venture to take concerted action to improve their conditions or recover their

liberty, the Government calls out the army to repress them, just as the Tsar's Government did. There has been more than one rising and each has been ruthlessly suppressed. The press is a State monopoly, so that nothing can be published without the permission of the Government. Little if any criticism or expression of opinion hostile to the Government is tolerated and no public meeting of protest is allowed. The dictatorship of the proletariat has become a dictatorship over the proletarians of an oligarchy claiming to represent a mythicised and personified Proletariat, just as other despotic authorities claim to be the representatives of God on earth. In fact, the tadpole has become a frog, not as Marx and Engels seem to have expected, a butterfly.

The free Socialist society recedes further and further into the distance. When Mr Bertrand Russell was in Russia, Lenin expressed the opinion that the transition stage—the dictatorship—would probably last twenty years. In December 1920 he told the Spanish Socialist delegates to Moscow that it might last forty or fifty years, and, when the delegates suggested that the granting of concessions to foreign capitalists might prolong it still more, he assented. But, he said, the concessions were nevertheless necessary, for the Russians could not go on suffering as they had done for the last three years and the world revolution was long in coming. Ardent advocates of the dictatorship of the proletariat in Western countries seem to imagine that it is a short cut to Socialism or Communism, and

accuse those of us that prefer the main road of liberty, of wishing to postpone the advent of Socialism. If the short cut is going to take half a century or more, I prefer to stick to the main road. But no such regime as that now existing in Russia can possibly last half a century. Lenin's declaration to the Spanish Socialist delegates is, in fact, a confession that the dictatorship of the proletariat has failed.

It is only just to say that its failure must to some extent be attributed to the peculiar conditions of Russia. The Russian experiment has been made in a country where the conditions would have been considered by Marx most unsuitable. For Russia in 1917 was hardly more advanced than France in 1789 and the Russian Communists have attempted to pass directly from a semi-feudal society to a Communist one. The Russian experiment cannot, therefore, be regarded as an experiment in what Marx would have considered normal conditions. Moreover, the Russian Communists went further at once than Marx and Engels thought it possible in 1848 to go even in the most advanced countries. Among the immediate measures proposed by the Communist *Manifesto* in the most advanced countries after the conquest of political power by the proletariat were a heavy progressive income tax and the abolition of all right of inheritance. Such proposals imply the gradual, not the immediate, suppression of private property in the means of production.

Conditions have changed since 1848 and the

programme of the Communist *Manifesto* is out of date for advanced countries in 1921, but Russia in 1917 was less advanced than the most advanced countries in 1848. It would have been wiser in Russia to have followed the advice of the Communist *Manifesto* in this regard, instead of attempting at once to expropriate all private capital. The revolution would then have had a powerful weapon against counter-revolutionaries and *émigrés*, whose private property of every kind it could have confiscated, in accordance with another recommendation of the Communist *Manifesto*. The fear of confiscation would have acted as a strong deterrent.

This was not the only example of the error of trying to do too much at once. The experience of Russia has shown that one of the greatest dangers that will menace Socialism in its cradle is that of diminished production. Lenin himself has warned the workers in other countries against the policy of discouraging production in capitalist conditions, lest it should promote a habit that will be dangerous to the social revolution in the future. It appears that the Russian workmen innocently imagined that, since they had taken the place of the bourgeois, they could imitate the bourgeois and cease to work. The more civilised and instructed workers of a great industrial country are unlikely to be so naïf, but nobody can foresee the psychological effects of social upheaval and it is essential that the economic incentive to production should be as strong as possible in the early days of a Socialist society. In Russia it was entirely removed by

the immediate institution of equal salaries for all workers of every category and grade. The consequence, as might have been expected, was the breakdown of production. The non-manual workers refused to work at all and the manual workers did as little work as possible. This system had to be abandoned for an elaborate scale of wages, differing according to the nature of the work and the grade of the worker.

The effect of the change on production was, however, inadequate and the Government resorted to industrial conscription. The result of the experiment has fully justified the objections of libertarians to forced labour. Its supporters are fond of saying that most people are already forced to work by economic pressure, while a small minority escape from the obligation, and that it would be more just to force everybody to work by law. It is because the obligation to work is a natural one that legal coercion is unnecessary. The reason why a minority escape at present from the natural obligation is that the capitalist system enables them to live on the labour of others. When that privilege has been abolished, the natural obligation to work will become universal and no further coercion will be required. If, in a society where the conditions are such that everybody is free to work—as is not the case at present—there are able-bodied persons that obstinately refuse to work, they must take the natural consequences and starve, unless public opinion prefers to treat them as other abnormal people are treated. But, although there might be

such persons at first, they would probably cease to exist or become extremely rare after two or three generations of a Socialist society.

There is a psychological error at the root of the arguments for industrial conscription, which means much more than a mere legal obligation to do some work of some kind. It means that all workers are under military discipline; that some person or persons have the power to force them to do some particular kind of work and to transfer them from one job to another without their consent. Russian workmen, until the conditions of industrial conscription were relaxed early in 1921, were bound to live in a particular place like mediæval serfs. It is all very well to say that the workers have very little choice now. It is true that the choice is very limited, but there is a certain choice in certain conditions. If labour is scarce, the choice is considerable and a good workman can choose his job within the limits of his capacities. But, whether the choice be more or less, there is always at least a semblance of liberty. Industrial conscription would remove even the semblance. People that do not understand what a difference that would make have no psychological perception.

Forced labour never has been and never will be so productive as even apparently free labour. Actual slave-labour compensated for inadequate production by its cheapness, for when once the slave had been bought, he cost nothing but his bare keep and it did not matter if it took two or even three

slaves to do the work of one free man. Socialism can hardly be based on cheap labour; that being so, industrial conscription will always be disastrous to Socialism. Some Socialists, who are opposed to industrial conscription as a permanent institution, believe that it will be necessary during the transition period to prevent diminished production. The experience of Russia shows that they are mistaken. The only safeguard against diminished production is the maintenance of the economic incentive. That has now been recognised in Russia by a system of bonuses to workmen and the introduction of piecework wherever possible.

Much hitherto unpublished information about Russian economic conditions since the revolution is given by E. Colombino in his valuable book, *Tre Mesi nella Russia dei Soviet*,* which differs from most of the books about Soviet Russia in that it consists mainly of facts, not of opinions. Signor Colombino, who is a metal worker, was one of the delegates of the Italian Socialist Party to the Second Congress of the Third International in July 1920 and spent three months in Russia. A comparison of the present production in Russia as a whole with that before the War would, of course, be misleading as a criterion of the results of the existing regime. In the first place the territory of Soviet Russia is smaller than that of the old Russian Empire and some of the present border States provided a large proportion of certain raw materials and other products. For example, the production

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of naphtha fell from 570,000,000 poods in 1912 to 71,000,000 in 1920 ; that of coal during the same period from 1,000,000,000 poods to 481,744,000 ; that of sugar from 108,746,100 poods in 1914 to 7,500,000 in 1920 ; that of gold from 2950 poods in 1911 to 95 poods in 1920. Before one could say what proportion of this appalling diminution is due to the present regime, one would have to know from what districts of old Russia the naphtha, the coal, the gold and the beet for making sugar principally came. Again, one important cause of diminished production in manufactured articles is the lack of raw materials, due to the infamous blockade of Russia by the Western Powers. Further, it has to be remembered that Russia has ever since the revolution been at war and that a large proportion of her best workers have been taken by the army.

It would, therefore, be unjust to attribute the whole of the diminution in Russian production, or even perhaps the greater part of it, to industrial conscription or the Bolshevik regime. But, when all allowances have been made, it is clear that industrial conscription has been a failure. Nothing shows that more clearly than the difference between the estimates and the actual production. For the estimates are, of course, based on the known resources and take into account the lack of certain raw materials and the withdrawal of men from production to the army. In hardly a single case did the production in 1920, according to the official figures given in the *Ekonomicheskaya Zhizn* of

21st December 1920, come near the estimates. Thus, the estimated production of sugar was 9,000,000 poods and the actual production 7,500,000. The estimated production of gold was 365 poods and the actual production 95. The estimates for 1921 were enormously in excess of the production for 1920—in many cases three, four or five times as much—and it may be assumed with something like certainty that they will not be realised or anything like it.

In the fourteen model “ shock ” factories in the metal industry, working for transport, the output of only three articles in the second six months of 1920 equalled or exceeded the estimates, namely, narrow-gauge locomotives, of which 19 were estimated and produced ; wagons and trucks, of which the estimate was 190 and the output 202 ; snow-ploughs, of which 108 were produced, the estimate having been 90. In the case of eleven other articles production was 50 per cent. of the estimate, or more, up to 90 per cent. in one case. The production of the remaining five articles mentioned was respectively, 44·7, 36, 35, 19·6 and 10·5 per cent. of the estimates. The production of paper in 1919 was 69 per cent. of the estimates ; that of wood pulp 65 per cent. ; that of cellulose 69 per cent. In the seven large india-rubber factories, where 30,000 workers were employed at the time of the Bolshevik revolution, there are now only 6000 workers, whose production is 50 per cent. of the normal ; the supplies of raw material in this industry, Signor Colombino says, are plentiful.

Diminution of individual production seems to be general. For instance, at Briansk, in Orel, the number of workers has been reduced from 20,000 to from 18,000 to 15,000, but the output has diminished 75 per cent. One of the causes of this is, of course, the terribly inadequate nourishment of the workers. But that is to a great extent the result of the hostility of the peasants to the present regime, which might perhaps have been avoided by a wiser policy. The facts given by Signor Colombino lead to the conclusion that things are going from bad to worse. In Moscow, for instance, there were 644 factories working in 1913; 136 in 1918 and only 91 in 1919. The population of Moscow decreased between 1917 and 1920 by 44·5 per cent., and that of Petrograd 71 per cent. The urban population generally decreased by about 30 per cent., except in Siberia, where it increased, owing, no doubt, to immigration from the rest of Russia.

Signor Colombino's book should be read in order that the terrible economic condition of Russia may be fully appreciated. As I have said, there are many causes of it, but among them must be included the rigorous application of dogmatic principles without regard to existing conditions and the attempt to establish all at once a Communist society in a country that had not reached a stage of economic development in which such a society is possible. It would have been better to follow less closely the maxims of Marx and adhere more closely to his scientific and—in the literal and non-pejorative sense of the term—opportunist spirit.

In my opinion, the Bolsheviks were right in repudiating the National Debt. That is one of the first steps that Socialists should take in any country if and when they get into power, and there was a special reason for it in Russia. In 1905, when the Anglo-French Loan saved the Tsardom and stifled the revolution, the Russian revolutionaries publicly declared that, if and when they came into power, they would not acknowledge the debts of the Tsar's Government. They were right to keep their word. But they were unwise in repudiating the debt without exceptions. I believe that, at first, an exception was made in the case of Russians holding less than a certain amount. That exception should have been extended to small foreign bondholders. I urged this policy at the time on a Russian friend of mine in touch with the Soviet Government, who said that he would transmit the opinion as that of a person with a certain knowledge of France. The consequences of the policy actually adopted were what I feared they would be. The whole French petite bourgeoisie and peasantry were made violently hostile to the Russian revolution and their hostility probably made French intervention against Russia possible. It is essential that Socialists in all countries should conciliate the small bourgeois and peasant proprietors, who are now among their most bitter enemies. Kautsky was quite right in saying that "a home worker or a small master with one single journeyman" should have been excepted in Russia from the disfranchisement of the bourgeoisie. Marx may

have been equally right in saying that small masters are the most unscrupulous exploiters of hired labour. But it is a question of expediency. It is good policy to buy these people's support, particularly in countries where the industrial proletariat is in a minority. In France, for example, Socialism will never be possible until the peasant proprietors have been squared.

The Bolsheviks saw the necessity of squaring the peasants, but they set about it in the wrong way. Their agrarian policy has perhaps been their greatest blunder. They should simply have collected the economic rent from the land-owners. That would soon have broken up the large estates and given land to all the peasants. Lenin is very scornful about the "renting out of small plots to the poor peasants" by the State, which he declares to be a "bourgeois" and "liberal" reform. It may be; but that does not seem to me to matter, if it is a desirable and workable system. In a country like Russia, where small production in agriculture must continue for a long time to come, it was the obvious system. In Russia, before the revolution, the majority of the peasants were proletarian or semi-proletarian. The small peasants who had little or no land would have been delighted to pay rent to the State for it, as a condition of obtaining it: after all, it would have been a form of taxation. The better-off peasants would have been glad enough to pay rent for their land rather than be deprived of it. All the peasants would have been conciliated, whereas they have all been estranged.

What the Bolsheviks did was at once to abolish private property in land—on paper—in the hope of organising Communist production on a large scale under State control. They then tried to win the support of the small peasants by stirring them up against the well-to-do peasants. The small peasants were quite willing to seize the land—the operation was sometimes accompanied by jacqueries and the murder of the former owners—but they had not the least intention of allowing it to be common property. Legally the land belongs to the State, not to the peasants, who are allowed to hold it only so long as they cultivate it. Actually, this is a legal fiction. The peasants have got the land and they intend to stick to it. Nothing but force will ever dispossess them, and it would now be impossible to make them pay the economic rent. The attempt to organise Communist agriculture on a large scale has, naturally, failed. The few Soviet farms worked by labourers formerly employed on the large estates hardly count in Russian agriculture.

Although the Bolsheviks have given the peasants the land, they have not conciliated them. The peasants are unwilling to supply the towns with food, because they can get nothing in return, and they resent the necessary use of force to compel them. How strained the situation is, Lenin's declaration in December 1920 to the Spanish Socialist delegates showed. He said that, so long as the peasants, who were the majority in Russia, had not adopted the Soviet point of view, the dictatorship "in the interest of the town workers"

would be maintained. The peasants, he added, hated the Bolsheviks, but they detested still more the Denikins and Koltchaks. The rural population would have to reconcile itself to Bolshevism, or there would be civil war. This confession of failure is a striking contrast to Lenin's assertion of the success of the Bolshevik agrarian policy in his reply to Kautsky, where he boasted that the peasants, for the first time in history, were in Russia "under the influence of a proletarian State."

Lenin has, however, wisely abandoned the policy of making war on the peasants to force them to accept Bolshevism. At the tenth congress of the Communist party, held at Moscow in March 1921, he announced a complete change in the agrarian policy of the Bolshevik Government. Since, he said, "we have not succeeded in changing them [the peasants] in three years, we must adapt our policy to theirs." The levies on agricultural produce have been abandoned and a tax in kind imposed on the peasants, who have the absolute ownership of all produce left over after payment of the tax and may dispose of it as they please. The right of private trading has been restored; it was authorised in the Moscow shops and markets by an order of the Moscow Soviet dated April 6, 1921. The co-operative societies have been released from the control of the Commissariat of Supply and their independence restored to them. By the Decree of April 7, 1921, co-operative organisations are even allowed to open works and factories, so the State monopoly of industry has gone. The

Bolsheviks have, in fact, been obliged to throw their Communist principles to the winds to save their power. The change of policy, in the words of Lenin himself, "implies a return to capitalism." Had the Bolsheviks been more opportunist to begin with, they would have avoided this complete surrender. There is a grave danger that Russia may become a backward peasant Republic, and that would be a disaster. It would be the triumph of barbarism over the only effective civilising force in Russia.

The development of the Russian revolution has closely resembled that of the French. In both cases foreign intervention has been an important factor. No doubt the temper of the Russian Communist leaders is authoritarian and fanatical. They are tyrants because they have been martyrs. It would be too much to ask of men that have been tracked and hunted, have been sent to Siberian prisons, have suffered years of exile and poverty for their convictions, that they should be tolerant when they get the upper hand. It is not surprising that, as Lenin said to the Spanish Socialist delegates, the Bolsheviks "have never talked of liberty." Like the early Christians, now that they are no longer persecuted but are in a position to persecute, they make the most of their opportunity. But this temper does not make for sound judgment or cool reasoning. Hatred, like any other passion, falsifies the judgment and obscures the reason. Some of the measures taken by the Russian Communists suggest that their hatred of the bourgeois,

even as individuals, is stronger than their love of the proletariat collectively. Nevertheless, it may be doubted whether the present despotism would have been possible even in Russia, but for foreign intervention. For it is the militarisation of the country that has made it possible and it is doubtful whether the war-weary Russian people would have submitted to military conscription, had not the national sentiment been aroused by foreign support of the various counter-revolutionary adventurers. The Governments of England, France and the United States have, therefore, a great responsibility for the present despotism in Russia. Again the history of the French Revolution repeats itself.

When Mr Bertrand Russell visited Russia, his opinion was that the revolution had reached a stage answering to the French Directoire. It has now got beyond that. The "dictatorship in the interest of the town workers" is a true form of Bonapartist pseudo-democracy. The Russian Government claims to be the interpreter of the "real will" of the proletariat—not, that is, of what the proletariat actually wants, but of what it would want, if it were more enlightened. The Soviets, deprived of all real power, occupy in the Russian system the place of the docile Parliaments of Napoleon I. and Napoleon III. The Russian Government, like the Napoleons, legislates by decree. The Russian elections, as in France under the First and Second Empires, are manipulated by the Government so as to secure a per-

manent majority. No doubt the men at the head of the Russian State machine are sincere and disinterested, but what will their successors be, if the regime should last half a century, as Lenin anticipates? Men capable of governing in such conditions without being demoralised do not exist. It would be unsafe to trust an angel from heaven with such powers. Already there are symptoms that the present rulers of Russia are being demoralised by arbitrary power and are, unconsciously, beginning to like power for its own sake. Were it otherwise they would not be human. Robespierre, the most sincere and disinterested of men, was demoralised by arbitrary power and ruined the French Revolution by continuing the Terror too long. The Bolsheviks seem likely to follow his example. As for their agents, it must be only too evident that a privileged oligarchy, like the Russian Communist party, will attract every ambitious and capable *arriviste*.

It seems to me, then, that the results of the Russian experiment in the dictatorship of the proletariat hardly justify the elevation of that Marxist hypothesis into a fetish, or even into the fundamental dogma of Socialism. I repeat that the Russian experiment has been made in conditions that, on Marxist principles, were not normal. But, although everything that has happened in Russia would not happen in every country, I am convinced that the dictatorship of the proletariat would develop everywhere on the same general lines. For like produces like and a system of

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authority and repression can never produce a society of free men. The use of force, if the circumstances make it unavoidable, is not the same thing as the exercise of authority, although both Engels and Lenin have confused the two. "If," said Engels, "the Paris Commune had not based itself on the authority of the armed people against the bourgeoisie, would it have maintained itself more than twenty-four hours?" Armed force is not authority and may be the negation of authority. It is one thing for the proletariat to use force in self-defence: it is quite another for it to "organise itself as the ruling class." The latter course is an exercise of authority, the former is not. We cannot destroy the State by means of the State, or authority by means of authority, or militarism by means of militarism. If we desire "an association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all," we must begin by laying the foundations of such an association, not of its exact opposite. And the beginning must be made, not after the social revolution, but before it.

CHAPTER VII.

REVOLUTIONARY SYNDICALISM.

ALTHOUGH Marxist Socialism influenced revolutionary opinion in France, the pure Marxist theory never gained so strong a hold there as in some other countries. The "parti ouvrier," founded by Jules Guesde and Paul Lafargue, which was strictly Marxist, was never so large as the "Possibilist" Socialist Party, of which Jaurès was the leader, with which it was united in 1905. French revolutionary opinion was traditionally libertarian and the influence of Proudhon and Bakunin held its own against that of Marx. It was also to a great extent anti-parliamentarist and opposed to all political action. These tendencies separated many French revolutionaries from the Reformist tendencies of many of the "Possibilists" on the one hand, and on the other from what they considered the centralising, and even *étatiste*, tendency of Marxist Socialism. About a quarter of a century ago a school of revolutionary thought developed that rejected the conquest of political power—the dictatorship of the proletariat—and opposed to it the conquest of economic power, as the method of passing from a capitalist to a Socialist society. Its theory was based on the maxim that "eco-

economic power precedes political power," and on the argument that an economic change can best be effected by economic, not political, methods.

The name given to this theory was that of revolutionary Syndicalism—from *syndicat*, the French word for a Trade Union. It owed much to Proudhon and Bakunin. Indeed, the famous saying of Proudhon: "L'atelier remplacera le gouvernement" ("the workshop will take the place of the Government") is still the motto of Syndicalism. The founders of Syndicalism came from various quarters. Some, like Pouget, had been anarchists; others, like Griffuelhes, Marxist Socialists. Others again had been Blanquists, followers of Proudhon, or members of the Allemane Group. A few, like Hubert Lagardelle, remained in the Socialist Party in spite of their adoption of the Syndicalist theory. But the great majority of the Syndicalist leaders not only left the Socialist Party or remained outside it, but violently attacked it as a party of "politicians." The bitter controversies between Socialists and Syndicalists before the War weakened and divided the French proletariat. The federal organisation of French Trade Unions, the "Confédération générale du Travail," commonly known as the C.G.T., which was founded in 1895, definitely adopted the Syndicalist programme at its Amiens Congress in 1906 and has officially adhered to it ever since. Before the War its official policy was abstention in all elections, but in fact this policy was never generally adopted and many Trade Unionists were active members of

the Socialist Party. Syndicalism spread to Italy and became the policy of the "Confederazione generale del Lavoro," the Italian equivalent of the C.G.T. In Italy, however, the Trade Union organisation gradually drew nearer to the Socialist Party, with which it has now for some time been definitely allied, and abandoned the Syndicalist theory in favour of Marxism. But in fact the Italian Trade Unionists follow Syndicalist methods and have applied them more consistently than the French. At bottom, they still have more faith in them than in the conquest of political power, although they do not abstain from political action. D'Aragona, the present Secretary of the Italian Confederation of Labour, is a member of the Italian Parliament.

Although Syndicalism became anti-Marxist, Sorel, who was the first to formulate the Syndicalist theory, maintained that it was a logical deduction from Marxist conceptions, and, in particular, from the economic or materialist interpretation of history. In his *L'Avenir socialiste des Syndicats*, which passed almost unnoticed at the time of its publication in 1898, but afterwards became famous, he held that the conditions had been modified by the development of Trade Unionism and that the conquest of political power was out of date. It had become evident, in his opinion, that the proletariat would not emancipate itself from all exploitation by making itself the ruling class instead of the bourgeoisie, as the bourgeoisie had made itself the ruling class in place of the aristocracy. When the

social revolution became possible, the State must be destroyed once and for all. Meanwhile, the proletariat had two methods of action: it should combat in the existing political organisation to obtain social legislation favourable to its development; and it should use all its influence on opinion, and all the power that it could get, to destroy the existing political organisation and to "wrest from the State and the local authorities all their attributions, one by one, to transfer them to the proletarian organisms in course of formation, that is to say, the Trade Unions." The proletariat should emancipate itself here and now from all but internal direction. Its first rule of conduct should be to remain exclusively proletarian. It should accept the help of intellectuals but not allow them to direct it. "To sum up my whole idea," said Sorel, "the future of Socialism depends on the autonomous development of the Trade Unions."

Later on, Sorel changed his mind about political action, which he admitted, as will have been seen, in 1898, and advised reliance on "direct" or industrial action alone. In this he was followed by the C.G.T., when it officially adopted his principles in 1906. Instead of parliamentary action, with the object of obtaining protective laws putting the proletariat under the tutelage of the State, Sorel recommended direct action to secure from the legislators facilities for autonomous development. For example, labour registry offices should be under the control of the Trade Unions, not of the municipalities; so should old-age pensions and out-of-

work allowances, poor relief, factory inspection and similar functions. In fact, the object of Trade Union action should be, not to conquer political power and capture the State in order to abolish it after having temporarily made use of it, but gradually to substitute the Trade Unions for the State. The class-war, as Sorel conceives it, "is not a struggle to capture the positions held by the bourgeois and dress up in their cast-off clothes ; it is a struggle to drain all the life out of the bourgeois political organisation and transfer all that is useful in it to a proletarian political organisation, gradually created as the proletariat develops."

~~The first great difference, then, between the purely Marxist conception of the social revolution and that of Syndicalism is that the former contem-~~
 plates a revolution followed by a period of transition "during which the State can be nothing else than a revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat," whereas the latter contemplates a gradual undermining of the State, of which the revolution is to be the climax. In the one case the period of transition or preparation follows the revolution ; in the other it precedes it. The second great difference between Syndicalism and Marxism, at any rate as interpreted by the Russian Communists and the Third International, is that the latter relies on the Communist Party as the chief instrument of social revolution, whereas Syndicalism relies on the Trade Unions. But the belief of the neo-Bonapartist Communists in the revolutionary possibilities of an active minority was shared by many of the

Syndicalists and was even predominant among them before the War. In the case of the Syndicalists, as in that of the Communists, it was a reaction against the futility of democratism. Pouget, in his pamphlet, *La Confédération générale du Travail*, objected to a democratic system even within the Trade Unions, on the ground that the lack of will of the majority would paralyse action. The minority, he said, were not disposed to abdicate before the inertia of a mass not yet inspired by the spirit of revolt, and it was the duty of the minority to act without taking the majority into account.


Unfortunately, whenever the minority did so act, the results were far from satisfactory. The constitution of the C.G.T. was such that it could be controlled by a revolutionary minority from very small, and even, in some cases, bogus Unions; for each Union had one representative and one vote, no matter what the number of its members. Moreover, it was thought unnecessary to make any great effort to get the mass of the workmen into the Unions. In 1914 the 2100 Trade Unions affiliated to the C.G.T. had a total membership of only 661,162—the highest on record up to that time. In 1912 the membership had been 575,276. In the United Kingdom the total Trade Union membership was 3,226,000 in 1912 and 4,199,000 in 1914. The result was that, whenever industrial action was attempted in France, it almost always failed, often with disastrous consequences to the Unions. The railway strike of 1910 reduced the membership of the Railway Unions almost to nothing. For the

decision to take action was usually made by the representatives of a minority even of the Trade Unionists, who did not follow their self-appointed leaders, and the bulk of the workmen were outside the Unions altogether.

The War killed the "active minority" policy and modified Syndicalist theory. General mobilisation enormously reduced the active Trade Union membership during the first two years of the War, but the development of munition works, to which men were brought back from the front, brought new recruits, and in 1918 the C.G.T. had 2500 affiliated Unions, with a total membership of nearly a million (997,548). After the Armistice the membership rapidly increased and by the end of 1919 it was 2,049,231. This change led to what is called the "Reformist" policy of the C.G.T., which is not Reformist in the proper sense of the term. The C.G.T. has simply become a Trade Union organisation, instead of being merely a revolutionary general staff. The influx of new members, for the most part not "class-conscious," made that inevitable. But the C.G.T. has not abandoned its Syndicalist principles, although it is now recognised that revolutionary action must be postponed until the bulk of the workmen have been organised. The present situation is the consequence of the mistakes in pre-war policy.

Some of the most ardent "active minority" Syndicalists, while remaining in the Trade Unions, have gone over to the Communist Party, attracted, no doubt, by its anti-democratic tendencies and its

promise of an immediate revolution. Former anarchists and libertarians have thus become advocates, at least in theory, of "iron discipline" and the dictatorship of the proletariat. Having obtained a majority on the Executive of the Railwaymen's Federation, they tried their hand once more in May 1920 at the "active minority" tactics. They called a railway strike without consulting the C.G.T., although they had undertaken not to do that, and rushed the whole of French Trade Unionism into a general strike, which failed utterly. The consequence was a reduction of 60 per cent. in the membership of the Trade Unions. It is to be feared that they have not yet learned the lesson, which is, nevertheless, plain enough. Everything in this world is done by active minorities, but in a country with a long democratic tradition, however imperfectly democratic its institutions may be, no minority, however active, can "make a revolution," or effect anything, unless it has the confidence of the majority, which is ready to follow it. As the Italian Trade Unionist, Baldesi, said: "A dictatorship of the Russian type is not possible in a country like Italy, with a long democratic tradition. For in Italy we are all a little anarchist." That is equally true of France and England. Mr Bernard Shaw has indeed said that "in England the majority will never be converted to the need of Government at all; nine-tenths of us are born anarchists." If that be true—and I think it is only an exaggeration of the truth—England is the most hopeful country in the world for a libertarian



Socialist experiment; and the least hopeful for an attempt at the dictatorship of the proletariat.

While the method of revolutionary Syndicalism is quite different from that of Marx, its purpose, it will be seen, is the same—to smash the existing State machinery. Syndicalists are quite ready to use force, if necessary—indeed, Sorel, in his *Réflexions sur la Violence* maintains that it will be necessary—but they do not expect from force more than it can accomplish, and, for Sorel, the strike is a form of violence. When the proletariat has accomplished its autonomy and built up its own institutions, the final blow will be given to the bourgeois State by the general strike, the occupation of the factories, or whatever means appear most likely to be effective at the moment.

One of the strongest points in the Syndicalist theory, in my opinion, is its insistence on the necessity that the proletariat should educate and prepare itself for the social revolution. In his speech at Nancy, already mentioned, Lagardelle said to the Marxists:—

“ You will be the masters of the hour, you will have all the power that yesterday belonged to the bourgeoisie, you will pile decree on decree and law on law, but you will not work a miracle and you will not make the workmen suddenly capable of replacing the capitalists. How, I ask you, will the possession of power by a few Socialist politicians transform the psychology of the masses, modify sentiments,

increase capacities, create new rules of life, and make it possible for a society of free men to exist in place of a society of masters and slaves? 'No! The transformation of the world does not depend on a simple change of Government. That would be really too easy, and the course of history is more exacting. A social order is not brought into being without a long preparation and it is here that Syndicalism, with a more realist sense of things as they are, opposes to your theory what I have called the Socialism of institutions. It reminds the workers that no change will be possible until they have created with their own hands a whole series of institutions intended to replace the bourgeois institutions.'

This courageous utterance may be compared with a passage from Francis Delaisi's *La Démocratie et les Financiers* * :—

"The people ought to know that, so long as it has not an élite of capacities to oppose to the capitalist élite, it will arrive at nothing. What good would it do to a poor devil to seize on an automobile if he did not know how to start and drive it? The economic machine is far more complicated than an automobile. Is there in the general staff of politicians that the proletariat has at its disposal a single man capable of managing the Bank of France or the Creusot Works? And it is proposed, not

* Published by *La Guerre Sociale*, Paris, 1910, p. 63.

merely to control credit and production as they are, but to perfect them and reconstruct them on a new plan. Before capitalist society can be conquered by force, it must be conquered by intelligence. Otherwise every insurrectional movement, even if victorious, is doomed in advance to failure and counter-revolution."

~~The warnings of Lagardelle and Delaisi have~~ been justified by events in Russia. Not that intelligence has been lacking in the Russian revolution; far from it. But it has not been proletarian intelligence. The Russian proletariat is directed entirely, as Sorel said the proletariat never should be, by intellectuals. In my opinion, Sorel was right; the workers must achieve their own emancipation. To do that, they must be educated. It is better that they should wait until they can "conquer capitalism by intelligence," rather than ~~allow themselves to be led by intellectuals, who are~~ ~~sure to make mistakes, as they have in Russia,~~ because they have only theoretical knowledge of proletarian thoughts and needs and, above all, because they are too much disposed to think that they know better than the proletariat what is good for it. That tendency is at the bottom of the Russian despotism, trying to interpret the "real will" of the people.

In England the education of the proletariat has made vast strides in the last few years and what M. Delaisi said more than ten years ago is no longer

true. The proletariat has an élite of capacities that can be compared to ~~the capitalist élite,~~ although it is not for the ~~most part to be found~~ among the politicians. The quiet, steady work that is being done by Labour Colleges and other educational institutions is doing more to prepare the society of the future than perhaps any other agency. It has already had most satisfactory results. Nobody that remembers as I do the British Labour movement of thirty years ago and compares it with the Labour movement of to-day, can fail to recognise the immense advance that has been made in knowledge and general culture. There were always intelligent men in the Labour movement, for intelligence is not a matter of class or education or instruction, but the proportion of instructed men in the movement has greatly increased and is steadily increasing. The old tendency to depreciate knowledge and instruction has passed away. The workmen now realise what an advantage knowledge and instruction have given to the bourgeoisie, and they have determined to instruct themselves. There is perhaps a greater demand for serious books among the proletariat than in the other classes—that is almost certainly true of books on economic questions. A London publisher told me that he had sold two thousand copies of a stiff economic work entirely through Labour organisations. Herein is the great hope of the future.

Great Britain, with its millions of Trade Unionists and its traditional attachment to personal liberty,

is the country of all others where the Syndicalist method is suitable. But the Trade Unions, if they are to adopt it effectively, must improve and co-ordinate their organisation and widen the scope of their action. Political action should by no means be abandoned, but it should be recognised that it can never do as much as direct or industrial action. To limit direct action dogmatically to what are called purely industrial objects, that is to say in reality questions of wages and conditions of labour, is to throw aside the most powerful weapon that the Trade Unions possess. The Trade Unions should press with all their strength for an ever-increasing share in the control and management of industry and for greater and greater powers of the kind suggested by Sorel. The control should be positive as opposed to the merely negative control hitherto exercised by Trade Union regulations—not joint control with the employers, but independent and autonomous control, of which the shop stewards' committees are the beginning. This will never be accomplished by political action alone. The collective strength of the Trade Unions cannot be exercised in an election, when the Trade Unionist, like other electors, is faced with confused issues and innumerable questions of every kind, and there is the women's vote forming a solid conservative block. In every country where the franchise has been extended to women conservatism and reaction have been strengthened. I do not say that for that reason it ought not to have been given, but the fact makes political action

even more inadequate and direct action more necessary than before. If political action is to have any effect at all, it must be backed by direct action, as it has been in Italy. It was the occupation of the factories that forced the Italian Government to introduce a measure giving the workmen a share in the control of industry. It is not an adequate measure, but it is by no means entirely useless. On the contrary, it is the first step in a process that will inevitably continue.

The Italian occupation of the factories was the most successful and encouraging example of the Syndicalist method that we have yet had. It is not true that the attempt to run the factories failed. It succeeded so well wherever the technicians and engineers co-operated, as they mostly did, that in some cases the output was increased from 20 to 30 per cent. This appears from an admirable account of the whole movement by a special correspondent published in the *Manchester Guardian* in October 1920. The movement might have ended in a social revolution but for the fear that Italy would be treated as Russia has been treated, and would be deprived of the necessities for which she is dependent on other countries. What was done in Italy could be done in England, and some day, no doubt, it will be done. Other examples of the Syndicalist method are the formation of Building Guilds in England and the acquisition of five ships by the Garibaldi Marine Co-operative Society at Genoa, which is working them successfully. A good example of them has

also been given by the Sinn Feiners, whose method of building up political institutions of their own to replace those of the English State closely resembles the tactics of the Syndicalists.

An excellent example has been set in France by the formation of the Economic Council of Labour, composed of representatives of the C.G.T., of the co-operative societies, of the non-manual workers, and of Government servants. It has been violently attacked by the Communist minority of the C.G.T., on the ground that bourgeois are admitted into it. Yet it is essential to the success of the Syndicalist method that the "black-coated proletariat" should be drawn into Trade Unionism and their particular function in industry recognised. Industry could not be carried on without the non-manual workers and it is of vital importance that they should make common cause with the manual workers. The Trade Union of every industry should include all the workers of every kind in that industry, both manual and non-manual; that is the ideal to be aimed at. The purpose of the Economic Council of Labour is to study the methods of gradually encroaching on the control of industry and wresting its functions from the State. It has been in existence for too short a time to make it possible to judge its utility, but it is an instrument that, properly used, should be capable of doing much.

The Syndicalist method avoids the dangers of the dictatorship of the proletariat. It involves no centralisation, no repression of personal liberty, no preservation of the State, even temporarily,

after the social revolution. If it were vigorously put into practice, the State and the capitalist class might be so much weakened when the moment of the social revolution arrived, that the latter would merely give the final blow to a tottering edifice. If the capitalist class were strong enough to resist by force, no doubt force would have to be used against it, but the struggle would be short and sharp in a country where the proletariat was the great majority and thoroughly well organised. It is a gradual method of course, but a vast economic change can only be brought about gradually, which does not necessarily mean that the process must be very long. I am convinced that, in England at any rate, it need not last half a century or anything like so long. It is not an "evolutionary" method, because a Socialist society cannot be evolved out of a capitalist one; on the contrary, it will destroy capitalist society by sapping and mining it. The method by which Guild Socialists propose to reach Socialism seems to me to be identical with the Syndicalist method. What Mr Cole happily calls the method of "encroachment" is precisely what is indicated by Sorel and Lagardelle. It is the most scientific method and that best adapted to a great industrial country with a highly organised proletariat.

The ultimate aim of revolutionary Syndicalism is, in the words of Pouget, the "reorganisation of society on the Communist plan" and the transference to the Trade Unions of the "few useful functions" of the State and the municipalities,

the others being simply suppressed. The latter proposal reproduces the fundamental vice of that very democratism to which Syndicalism is so bitterly opposed—the concentration of all functions in the hands of a single organism. The Trade Unions, like the Paris Commune, would have a universal competence. It is probable that all Syndicalists would not now insist on this part of their original programme. In any case, the system of functional representation proposed by Mr Cole is much to be preferred.

There are also grave objections to the economic proposals of pure Syndicalism. The Syndicalist form of Communism differs widely from the Marxist form, for, according to the Syndicalist theory, the means of production other than land would belong to the Trade Unions, which would have the whole management and control of production. The objections to this system are particularly obvious in the case of public services, like railways, and natural monopolies, like mines. I should suppose that in a Socialist society railway travelling and every other form of common transport would be as free as travelling on foot. After all, when the railways and other forms of transport cease to be private property, there is no more reason why individuals should pay for taking a train or a tram than for using a road. People used to pay for using the roads in England, except when they were on foot, but nobody would propose to restore the turnpikes. The time will come when it will seem as unnatural to pay for getting into a train as

it would be to pay a fee every time one walked out of one's house into the street. Free transport of every kind and free posts, telegraphs and telephones would have effects of incalculable benefit on production and exchange, on international relations, and on human solidarity. It is obvious that, if the railways are to be free, they cannot be the property of the railway workers, who in that case would starve.

Further, the railway workers could not be allowed to decide such matters as the number of trains and their hours merely to suit their own convenience and without regard to that of the public. Nor could the postal workers be allowed to decide, without regard to the public convenience, how many collections and deliveries of letters there should be. The consumers, that is, the community as a whole, must have a voice in such matters. The impossibility of making public services and natural monopolies Trade Union property is now recognised by the French Syndicalists, who propose for them the system of "industrialised nationalisation" mentioned in a previous chapter. That system is no doubt the best in existing economic conditions, but there are other ways of giving the consumers a voice in the regulation of such matters in a Socialist society.

As regards industry in general, the Syndicalist system is open to the grave objection that it might give the respective Trade Unions a monopoly. As I understand it, it would mean that every worker would have to belong to a Trade Union and

independent production would be suppressed. That in itself would be a serious restriction of personal liberty, of which Syndicalists are ardent defenders. And, if every industry were owned and controlled by a single national Trade Union, the consumers would be at its mercy and all the evils of monopoly would ensue. If, as some Syndicalists propose, each factory were owned by the workers in it, that objection would be removed, for in that case there would be no monopoly and competition would continue. The pure Syndicalist system has, however, the drawback of being based entirely on the producer and leaving out of account the interests of the consumer. Some Socialists hold that, in a society where every able-bodied person was a producer, that would not matter, since the consumer and the producer would be identical. There is a confusion of thought in this argument. At present the vast majority of men are both producers and consumers, but the interests of an individual as a producer are not identical with his interests as a consumer and, in any form of society, there might well be a conflict of interest between a particular group of producers and the rest of society. Here again functional representation is needed. The Guild Socialists are right in holding that an economic system should not be based either entirely on the producer or entirely on the consumer, but should take into account the interests of both.

The general principle of the Syndicalist system, like the Syndicalist method, is, in my opinion,

more suited to existing conditions in the great industrial countries than pure Marxism. Sorel was right in saying that it was an application of Marxist principles to changed conditions, for the fundamental Marxist principle is that Socialist theory should be an induction from an existing class-struggle—"from a historical movement going on under our very eyes." The most important movement going on under our very eyes is the Trade Union movement, the development of which has modified the conditions of the class-struggle, to the advantage of the proletariat. The Trade Unions are the only agency by which Socialism can be brought about. A revolution can never be imposed on the millions of Trade Unionists by any active minority, nor will the workmen in a country with a long democratic tradition ever submit to the dictatorship of the Communist or any other party.

In a country like Russia, where the people are habituated to despotism, it may be comparatively easy to transfer them from one despotism to another. In a country like England no Socialist system that is not democratic and libertarian will ever succeed. The attempt to impose pure Marxism—still more the elementary Marxism of the Communist *Manifesto*—is, in the strict sense of the term, reactionary. Moreover, it transforms into dogmas what Marx put forward as hypotheses. It is more in accordance with the spirit of Marx to take account of the modifications in economic conditions and modify the hypotheses accordingly.

For my part, however, I cannot accept the

pure Syndicalist theory as a satisfactory working hypothesis for the formation of a libertarian Socialist society. It needs modification to meet the objections that have been mentioned. The best working hypothesis, in many respects, that has yet been formulated is, in my opinion, that of Guild Socialism, of which Mr Cole is the chief exponent. It is, in fact, an attempt at a synthesis between Marxism and Syndicalism and has the great advantage of being both decentralising and democratic and of respecting personal liberty. But I have certain objections to make to some of the proposals of Guild Socialism, which will be dealt with in the next chapter.

CHAPTER VIII.

LIBERTARIAN SOCIALISM.

It is not my purpose to plan out in detail a complete social system. Apart from the fact that such a task would involve several volumes, whereas I have only a few pages, I do not believe it to be possible. The details of the new social order can be worked out only in practice; they cannot be settled in advance. All that one can do is to suggest the broad lines on which a Socialist society should be ordered, so as to secure for each individual the maximum of liberty, or rather the minimum of constraint.

The first and most important means of production is the land, for without it nobody could exist or produce at all. Its socialisation is, therefore, the first and most important of socialisations. Libertarian Socialists would effect it by the simple process of expropriating the economic rent, which would be collected by the community instead of by the land-owners. This is a change that might be effected by constitutional methods and it is astonishing that, although land nationalisation is included in the programme of the Labour Party, that party

insists on it so little and gives it no prominence in elections or public meetings. Indeed, one heard much more about land nationalisation twenty or thirty years ago than one does now. It has been put in the background in favour of proposals of less importance from every point of view, and, in particular, from the point of view of bringing Socialism nearer. The Reformists, who believe it possible to reach Socialism by constitutional and parliamentary methods, neglect the very question to which those methods could be successfully applied, and devote their energies to the municipalisation of milk or beer, about which nobody cares a brass button and which would do nothing at all to bring Socialism nearer.

The appropriation by the community of the economic rent of land would be an extremely popular proposal in all classes except the small class unpleasantly affected by it. The support of the great majority of the middle classes could be obtained for it. So should that of Manchester Liberals, if any such still exist and if they retain any belief in their own principles. The expropriation of the economic rent is advocated by extreme individualists, such as my friend, Mr August Schvan, and M. Henri Lambert, the Belgian economist, on the logical ground that land is a natural monopoly and that, on individualist principles, there should be no private monopoly. It could be done in a Budget

by imposing a tax of twenty shillings in the pound on ground rents, but that would not be a safe or satisfactory way of doing it. For what is done in one Budget can be undone in another. Moreover, public opinion would not tolerate a proposal to expropriate land-owners without compensation, while all other capitalists were left in possession. It would be impossible to take all the fortune of a man that happened to have invested his money in ground rents and leave untouched that of his brother, who had inherited the same sum from their father and invested it in another way. It would be foolish to give such a handle to our opponents. Moreover, there is no real distinction between private property in land and private property in other means of production.

Mr August Schvan has made the practical proposal that the land-owners should be compensated to the extent of a certain proportion of the capitalised value of their rents—say half—and the sum necessary for that purpose should be raised by a levy on other forms of capital. From the Socialist point of view this would have the great advantage of partially expropriating all capitalists. It would be necessary to compensate in full persons with incomes not exceeding a small maximum entirely derived from land, or at least to pay them their incomes for life. And persons owning less than a certain capital should be exempt from the capital

levy, which should be graduated. There could, of course, be no question of compensation if economic rent were expropriated as the result of a social revolution, together with other forms of capital. But it is desirable not to wait for the social revolution to take it over. There are probably some capitalists intelligent enough to recognise that their only chance of not losing all is to sacrifice half, and they might even support such a proposal as has been suggested in the hope of staving off a social revolution, or at least postponing it. If there are any such, let us by all means accept their support, without guaranteeing their hopes.

The economic rent, if and when expropriated in existing conditions, should not be used for any State purposes, least of all for paying interest on or extinguishing the National Debt. I fail to understand why the Labour Party bothers itself about the National Debt. Sooner or later the National Debt will have to be repudiated, if not in name, at least in fact by some subterfuge, and we may leave it at that. It is true that a capital levy to pay off the National Debt would in fact be a partial repudiation. In any case, when we have got the economic rent, let us stick to it and not pour it into the insatiable maw of the State. It has been proposed to distribute it among the municipalities in proportion to their population, but for my part I much prefer the suggestion of Mr August Schvan

that it should be divided equally among all the inhabitants of the country. The sum received annually by each would, of course, be small, but it would count in the budget of families with small incomes, for every child would receive his or her share from birth. The shares of children under sixteen should be paid to their mother, whether married or not, or—only in cases where the mother was dead or deprived of the legal custody of her children—to the father or other legal guardian. An endowment of motherhood would thus be provided and women would be put economically in a more independent position. In a Socialist society the economic rent might be applied to education and other public purposes, but that is a question for the future.

The system to be avoided in regard to land and buildings is that which, I understand, exists in the Russian towns, where the State does not collect the economic rent and some authority allots a tenement to each individual or family, who thus live rent free. This simply means that a present of the economic rent is made to the occupiers for the time being. No doubt the quartering of proletarian families in the former palaces of grand dukes has a symbolical and spectacular effect. The idea of the proletariat living in Park Lane appeals to the imagination. But all the proletariat cannot live in Park Lane, or even in Mayfair

and Belgravia, and there is no particular reason why Mr Smith should live rent free in Park Lane and Mr Brown remain in Hackney. That would merely mean that Mr Smith enjoyed a much larger share of the economic rent than Mr Brown. Even in a Socialist society, all sites, all neighbourhoods and all houses cannot be equally desirable from every point of view. What possible way is there of allotting them justly? The only rational method is that of charging the economic rent. Those that are willing to pay the most will have the first choice. It is not, perhaps, a perfect system, but it is the only practical one. Perfection is unattainable in this world. Of course, as a temporary measure, immediately after a social revolution, or even before it, less than the actual economic rent might be charged to provide decent homes for the too numerous families that have none at present in big houses now occupied by single families. But some rent should always be charged. The economic rent should be the property of the whole community, whose collective labour creates the value of the land, and all the individual members of the community should have an equal share of it. They can have it only if the economic rent is charged. The Russian system, which seems at first sight so egalitarian, is in fact a system of privilege. I suspect that the friends of the Communist officials get the first choice of houses.

Agricultural, like urban, land should in a libertarian Socialist society be rented by the community either to associations or individuals. Since most forms of agriculture in modern conditions are best conducted on a large scale, no doubt the greater part of agriculture would be in the hands of unions of agriculturists. But certain forms of agriculture, such as wine-growing and nursery-gardening—particularly the latter—can be as well or better managed on a smaller scale. Anybody that has lived both in Paris and London knows the difference between the garden peas from the small nursery-gardens close to Paris and the field peas that one almost always gets in London. Intensive culture makes it possible for the French nursery-gardeners to pay the high rents obtained for land near a large town. I see no reason why an individual should not rent land in a Socialist society and cultivate it for his own benefit in any way he pleases. It is improbable that he would be able to compete successfully with co-operative large-scale agriculture in growing cereals, for example, but, if he could, why not? He must not be allowed to exploit his own family, as the French peasant farmers do, but I see no objection to his employing other people, if he needs help and can find it. He would not be able to find it, unless the conditions that he offered were at least as good as people could get for themselves by cultivating land on their own account, or as members

of an agricultural union. The persons employed would not form a proletariat, since they would not be in the position of being able to find work only so far as the work is profitable to an employer. They would be employed by their own free choice because they preferred it. If it were easy for cultivators to find persons willing to be employed, that would mean that the system of individual cultivation worked better than co-operative large-scale agriculture, for it would mean that the individual cultivator could offer better conditions than a man would get by joining in co-operative agriculture. I think it most unlikely—indeed almost impossible—that that would happen, but, if it did happen, nothing should be done to prevent it. For, if individual cultivation worked better than co-operative large-scale agriculture, it should survive. Socialism is a hypothesis to be tested, not a dogma to be imposed, and its validity can be tested only by its working.

The Guild Socialist theory is perhaps rather unfortunately named, for its title has a mediævalist flavour. This has probably prevented it from receiving as much attention as it deserves, particularly on the Continent, where it is almost unknown. But the “guilds” of Guild Socialism are very unlike the mediæval gilds; they are, in fact, Trade Unions controlling production. The proposed organisation of the guilds is federal.

Each factory would be "to the fullest extent consistent with the character of its service a self-governing unit, managing its own productive operations and free to experiment to the heart's content in new methods, to develop new styles and products, and to adapt itself to the peculiarities of a local or individual market." The local guilds would be federated in regional and national organisations, whose duties "would be mainly those of co-ordination, of regulation, and of representing the guild in its external relations." For a full account of the Guild Socialist system I must refer the reader to Mr Cole's valuable books, especially the latest, *Guild Socialism Restated*, from which I have just quoted. I cannot here attempt a detailed appreciation of Mr Cole's proposals. Indeed, I can do little more than mention the points as to which I differ from him and give my reasons for differing. That is not because I do not appreciate the value of Mr Cole's contribution to the discussion of Socialist theory, but merely for reasons of space. In my opinion, few writers on Socialism since Marx and Engels have made so valuable a contribution to that discussion as he.

If Mr Cole had done nothing more than initiate the idea of functional representation, he would deserve our gratitude. For functional representation, as I have already said, is, in my opinion, the solution of the problem of democracy. It corrects the fundamental vice of democratism and

of all Socialist systems hitherto proposed, including even the Syndicalist system and that of the Paris Commune, namely the concentration of all functions in the hands of omni-competent representatives.

As the quotations just given will have shown, the Guild Socialist system has the great advantage of being decentralising. Centralisation is the great danger of every other form of Socialism. A system of centralised Socialism may not be *étatiste* in theory, but it will inevitably end in the restoration of the State. That is one of the chief objections to pure Marxism, as Bakunin recognised. Centralisation makes a strong central Government necessary, and a strong central Government is a State. This was understood by the Communards in 1871, who were right in taking the Commune as the unit instead of the nation, but mistaken in proposing to entrust all functions to a single representative body. Mr Cole follows the Communards in the former respect, but avoids their mistake. His proposed system of communal federal organisation, with direct election only for the representatives of the small units, who would send delegates to the regional and national bodies, seems to me excellent, safeguarded as it is by the right of recalling representatives. His proposals for the administration of what he calls the "civic services"—education, public health, and so on—appeal to me equally strongly, and there is no objection from the liber-

tarian point of view to entrusting distribution to the co-operative societies, except in the case of what Mr Cole calls "collective consumption," for which "Collective Utilities Councils" are proposed. For Mr Cole proposes to give no monopoly to the co-operative societies and would allow the small tradesman to survive if he can. If he can, that will prove that he fulfils a useful function. Probably the survivals would be limited to certain special categories.

The greatest advantage of Guild Socialism, as compared with other Socialist systems—in particular, pure Marxism—is that it involves no monopoly at all, except in the very few cases where it is unavoidable, such as railways or mines. The guild system is not put forward, as Marxist Communism is by its dogmatic apostles, as the one and only possible system, to be imposed everywhere without regard to local conditions. Mr Cole no doubt contemplates the guild organisation as the normal system for the principal industries, but he allows the existence of several regional or local guilds in the same industry and of independent factories outside the national guild of their particular industry. Moreover, he proposes to "let alone and leave with the greatest possible freedom of development the small independent producer or renderer of service." These proposals safeguard personal liberty and prevent monopoly—that rock

on which many Socialist systems would split. Nobody would be obliged to join a guild, and the ideal of libertarian Socialism—voluntary association—would be attained. Human solidarity is a fact. It arises, in the words of M. Henri Lambert, “not only from interdependence in the division of labour and the exchange of services, but from a common insecurity and powerlessness in the presence of Nature, which has to be dominated and conquered.” * But it should be left to natural causes to produce solidarity. Voluntary co-operation is an essential condition of progress. A forced solidarity would be an obstacle to progress.

The most important difference between Guild Socialism and Syndicalism is that, under the Guild Socialist system, the means of production would all be the property of the community as a whole, which would entrust the various guilds or associations of workers with the management and control of industries for the public benefit, whereas Syndicalism would make the means of production, other than land, the property of the respective associations of workers themselves. It is sometimes said that this is not Socialism, but the means of production are socialised, whether their collective owners are a geographical or an industrial group. In my opinion, the Syndicalist system is to be

* *Le Nouveau Contrat Social*, p. 200. Brussels: Maurice Lamertin; Paris: Félix Alcan, 1920.

preferred in this respect, except for public services, natural monopolies, and the banking and credit system, which may be considered a public service and is already almost a monopoly. A banking guild working on its own account would be too powerful. The public services would include railways and all other forms of transport, posts, telegraphs, telephones, and all that comes within the category of what Mr Cole calls "collective consumption." For all these the guild system would be more satisfactory than that of "industrialised nationalisation" in a Socialist society, for due provision is made for giving the consumers the necessary voice in their control. But for ordinary industry the actual ownership of the industries by the workers in them would have the advantage of providing an economic incentive. Under the system of public ownership the workers would be paid fixed salaries, the amount of which would not depend on the output or the success of the enterprise. Under the system of ownership by the particular workers themselves their earnings would depend to some extent on output and the success of the enterprise. I believe this to be of supreme importance. The strengthening of the economic incentive is, I am convinced, the only method of averting the danger of a diminution of production following a social revolution. Provided that the guilds or associations of workers had no monopoly—and

they would have none in the conditions proposed by Mr Cole—there would be no danger in giving them the absolute ownership of industry.

In collective production different salaries may be paid for different kinds of work, but it is difficult to differentiate between individuals doing the same kind of work, except by the system of piecework, which is not possible in all trades and is perhaps undesirable in any. In the capitalist system, therefore, the economic incentive scarcely exists for the individual workman and that is one reason why that system is breaking down. Workmen are getting tired of producing to make profits for their employers. Many Socialists think that they will be more willing to produce for the benefit of the community. I doubt it very much. They want to produce for themselves. If the workers in a factory or the members of a guild owned the factory in which they worked, even if all the workers of a particular category were paid the same salaries on account, and even if they all had the same share of the surplus, they would have individually a strong economic incentive in the fact that, the greater the success of the enterprise, the more there would be to divide. I am convinced that production would benefit both in quality and quantity. There would be a healthy competition, which will just be as necessary in a Socialist society as in any other. There is no necessary opposition between

> co-operation and competition ; there can be competition between groups as between individuals. And there will always be competition, except in a system of universal monopoly. Even if prices were fixed, there would be competition of quality.

I am far from saying that human nature can never be modified. It has been modified in the past by economic conditions, by climate, by general environment and other factors, and no doubt will be in the future. But there are certain fundamental instincts in human nature that seem unlikely to be modified. It seems likely that self-interest will always be the chief motive of human conduct. At any rate, it is at present and, so far as we can judge from what we know of history, always has been. So innate is self-interest in human nature that it is difficult to say where it begins and ends ; there is an element of self-interest even in what seems the purest altruism. Nor is self-interest ultimately detrimental to the general interest, provided it be enlightened. Unenlightened self-interest is a form of stupidity and all forms of stupidity are detrimental to the general interest. We can, I think, rely on enlightened self-interest to produce a sufficient amount of civism. To take a homely example : if one is in a hurry to catch a train and one's taxi is held up, one is inclined in the moment of irritation to curse the regulation of the traffic. But everybody

recognises in his calmer moments that, if the traffic were not regulated, nobody would catch a train at all, except by starting an hour earlier than at present. That is enlightened self-interest. It works better on the whole than altruism, for, being based on reason, it is more dependable.

We can base society only on human nature as it is at present—not on human nature as it may possibly become. And it is safer to allow rather for the weaknesses of human nature than for its qualities. Nothing could be more foolish than to base a social order on the assumption of an exalted altruism or a probably impossible perfectibility. If Socialist conditions improve human nature, so much the better, but it would be courting disaster to assume that they will. We may hope that the spirit of civism will be so strengthened that people will all do their best for the public benefit, even though they are no better off themselves than if they did their worst, but it would be fatal to assume that. We must assume the contrary. Then, if the assumption turns out to be mistaken, so much the better. Whereas, if we make the other assumption and it turns out to be mistaken, our whole system will be ruined.

All business men know that people as a rule work better when they are “interested,” as the phrase goes. If manufacturers and shopkeepers give commissions on sales to their salesmen, it is because

they have found by experience that the system increases the sales. The output of coal increased when an arrangement was made by which its increase led to a corresponding increase in the miners' wages. That seems to shock some people, but I doubt the sincerity of their scruples. It seems to me quite natural. The negative evidence of the opposite system is still more convincing. Few would maintain that the efficiency of Government departments is increased by the system of promotion by seniority rather than by merit, of salaries rising by regular stages, and security of tenure. When it comes to a State monopoly, like the French monopolies in tobacco and matches, it makes no difference to anybody engaged in the manufacture whether the article manufactured is good or bad, it is nobody's interest to search for new methods or styles—and the results are known to every visitor to France. All experience shows the necessity of the economic incentive, especially the experience of those cases where it does not exist.

In this connection the eternal question is raised whether equal incomes are desirable or possible in a Socialist society. Mr Cole agrees with Mr Bernard Shaw that they are, but for him they are only an ideal that will become possible "only in the atmosphere of a free society, and even then only by a gradual process." He expressly says that a Socialist society cannot begin with equal

incomes. That is enough : we need not quarrel about the possibilities of a remote future. For my part, a system of equal incomes does not appeal to me even as an ideal. I feel in no way injured by the fact that Mr Bernard Shaw and Mr H. G. Wells, for instance, earn far more by their pens than I do. It seems to me quite natural and just. What is neither just nor natural is that a gentleman may have a much larger income than Mr Shaw or Mr Wells, or perhaps even than Edison or Marconi, merely because his grandfather made a corner in hairpins. My experience is that most people agree with me. They see no objection to inequality of income, provided that it is not too great, that the smallest incomes are adequate to secure decent comfort, and that the larger ones appear to be deserved. I do not believe that the ideal of equal incomes makes any wide appeal.

There is a famous Communist maxim : " From each according to his abilities ; to each according to his needs." It sounds very well in a public speech, but I should like to know what it means. Literally, it should mean that everybody should be allowed to take whatever he likes out of the common stock. That would hardly work, even in a family, still less in a larger community. Such a system indeed ignores fundamental tendencies of human nature ; it might do for angels. If the maxim does not mean that, it means nothing—and that is the

more probable hypothesis. M. Henri Lambert suggests a maxim that approaches more nearly to justice: "To each according to his services." I say no more than "approaches more nearly to justice," for absolute justice is unattainable in a relative world. Of course it is impossible to estimate the money value of the various services rendered by each individual to the community. In practice, the maxim will mean: "To each according to the value that the public puts on his services." It will be to a great extent a question of supply and demand. If cinematographs are still popular in a Socialist society and there is only one Charlie Chaplin, no doubt he will earn a larger income than many persons whose services are more useful to society—although, for my part, I refuse to admit that so great an artist is not useful to society. But that does not seem to me to matter. The important thing is that nobody should exploit anybody else, and Charlie Chaplin exploits nobody. I do not envy him his large income, to which I have contributed an infinitesimal fraction.

The disastrous consequences of the Russian attempt to pay everybody the same income are only what might have been anticipated. It is true that self-interest does not always take the form of a desire to make money. For some people there are stronger motives, such as ambition, or love of the work for its own sake. But the work that

people love for its own sake is usually a pleasant or very interesting kind of work—very often the work by which they do not earn their living. Even in a society with equal incomes there would be no lack of artists, or writers, or inventors, or men of science—there might even still be too many artists—but there would probably be a serious lack of road-sweepers and coal-miners. Nobody would do disagreeable or monotonous work and industrial conscription would become necessary. That, too, has been tried in Russia, with what results we have seen. No doubt some of the actually disagreeable work could be dispensed with and some done by machinery, when human labour was no longer cheaper than machinery. But some would always remain, as well as a large amount of monotonous and purely mechanical work. Mr Cole proposes special attractions, such as shorter hours, or six months' holiday in the year. But a man paid a twelve months' salary for six months' work would in fact be more highly paid, and, in a system of Guild Socialism such as Mr Cole proposes, I see nothing to prevent him from doing work on his own account during his holidays and thus earning more money. In a Socialist society the disagreeable work will have to be particularly highly paid, or it will not be done at all ; and after all that is only just.

Mr Cole proposes that the allocation of capital

should be a matter for the Commune. This proposal would necessarily be modified if the Guild Socialist system were modified, as I have suggested, by giving the ownership of ordinary industries to the respective groups of workers. Each group would naturally decide the question of allocating capital for future production and the Commune, "either locally, regionally, or nationally," would deal only with the capital required for the public services and natural monopolies.

One of the gravest objections that I have to make to the Guild Socialist proposals concerns the fixing of prices. As I understand it, all prices are to be fixed by agreement between the various organisations concerned, with an appeal to the Commune in case of disagreement. Mr Cole takes as an example the price of milk, but it is comparatively easy to fix the price of milk. It is quite another matter to fix the price of everything. The attempts made during the War failed, except in the simplest cases, such as bread, milk and coal. In Paris different prices were fixed, according to quality, for meat, butter and some other articles of food. The natural consequence was that no shop ever had any but the best quality—at the maximum price. Co-operative societies in a socialist order might be more honest than are individual tradesmen, but we had better not count on it. Prices of many things must necessarily vary continually, even in a Socialist

society, for they depend on varying conditions. They would, therefore, have to be fixed at very frequent intervals. I cannot think that the Guild Socialists have realised what the fixing of all prices means. It would take the whole time of an army of functionaries and then it would be so badly done that it would satisfy nobody. It could not be well done, for it is an impossible task.

The question of prices would not arise if, as the Communist *Manifesto* says, selling and buying are to disappear. But selling and buying can never disappear, unless we return to primitive Communism and dole out rations of everything to everybody. Even then, selling and buying would not really disappear, for, since one person would get, for instance, more bread than he wanted and too little sugar, he would barter some of his bread for the surplus sugar of a large bread-eater with a less sweet tooth. And barter is the primitive form of selling and buying. The distribution of what we call luxuries, because they are scarce, would be a little difficult in such a system, for there would never be enough to go round. The only method that I can think of would be to dole them out in turn. Then the teetotaller would get one day a bottle of Chambertin and the non-smoker a dozen Havana cigars, and the barter would begin again. The teetotaller might barter his bottle of Chambertin for a lobster with a man to whom lobster invariably

gave indigestion. I do not know whether anybody seriously proposes such a return to primitive barbarism. If not, selling and buying are inevitable. Even if all incomes were equal and there were no currency in the proper sense of the term, we should all have to be given coupons of some sort, representing our claim on the national production, and there would have to be some measure of value. It would be impossible to issue coupons entitling people to so much cloth, woollen, silk or other material, so much tobacco, so many tea-cups, and so on, without regard to value. The selling might be a State or a communal monopoly, but it would still be selling, even if prices were fixed by regulation, and there would still be buying on the part of the individuals. It is impossible to escape from selling and buying, either by barter or by some more civilised method, unless and until each person himself produces all that he needs, because it is impossible to escape from exchange. And why anybody should wish to escape from it passes my understanding.

The best way of dealing with prices is to leave them to supply and demand. This is terribly bourgeois, I know, for it means free trade, free selling and buying, those bourgeois theories denounced by the Communist *Manifesto*. I am very sorry but, if the choice has to be made between bourgeois good sense and proletarian nonsense,

I prefer bourgeois good sense—and *vice versa*. The law of supply and demand is no more anti-proletarian than the law of gravitation (with whatever modifications modern discovery may have made necessary). The operation of supply and demand in determining "values" is a fact. It is always unwise to ignore facts. I see that Marx's latest biographer says that "Marx's theory of value and surplus value has rather the significance of a proletarian slogan than of an economic truth." That is discreetly and politely put. However useful proletarian slogans may be for revolutionary propaganda, they are unsafe foundations for an economic system. There is, in fact, no way of determining the value of anything except the old way of discovering how much people are prepared to pay for it.

The Guild Socialists hanker after the "just price." It was defined by mediæval moral theologians as a price which, after repaying the producer the cost of raw material and production, would give him a just return for his labour. But who on earth can decide what is a just return for the labour expended by a particular individual on producing a particular article? Moreover, the attempt is futile, for if nobody wants the article produced, the producer must be content with the honour of having produced it as the only return for his labour. A man might spend months on

producing a perfectly useless object that nobody wanted—people have often spent even years on such a task—but the fact that he had done so would not give it any value. The “just price” was, of course, purely theoretical, even in the Middle Ages, when prices were determined to a great extent by supply and demand, just as they are now, always have been, and always will be, although the operation of supply and demand was limited by restrictions and quasi-monopolies.

The “just price” of the Guild Socialists is not that of the mediæval moral theologians; Mr Cole defines it as “a price satisfactory to the social sense of the community.” I confess that I have no idea what that means. The price most satisfactory to individuals is the lowest possible price and that is likely always to be the case. The only sense that I can give to the phrase “a price satisfactory to the social sense of the community” is a price that people are willing to pay. If they can possibly go without the particular article, they will refuse to pay more; if they cannot possibly go without it, they will probably revolt if they are asked more. It seems to me probable that people would resent much more a price that they considered too high, if it had been fixed by regulation, than if it were the result of the operation of supply and demand. That was, indeed, the case during the War. The fixed price might in fact

be the lowest possible price in the circumstances, but it would be very difficult to convince people of that, and the attempt would involve endless controversies with conflicting statistics. I do not envy the members of the bodies that had the duty of fixing prices ; they would be the most unpopular people in the country. It is probable that sooner or later it would be impossible to find anybody willing to undertake the duty.

It is not difficult to find examples of the impossibility of deciding what is a "just price." Two painters spend exactly the same amount of time in painting each a picture, on which each of them has expended exactly the same sum for canvas, brushes and paint. But one picture is a great work of art and the other is a daub. According to the mediæval moral theologians the "just price" of both pictures is the same, but, if the price of both pictures were fixed at the same amount, it is probable that one painter would sell his picture and the other would have to keep his ; because in fact it has no value at all, not even the small value of the raw materials, which have been wasted. For nobody wants it. It might happen, on the other hand that, although one picture was a great work of art and the other had no real artistic value, the latter was not just an incompetent daub, but a showy painting of an attractive subject executed with a certain amount of technical skill.

In that case, many more people might want the bad picture than the great work of art. Supposing that the persons called upon to fix for each picture "a price satisfactory to the social sense of the community" happened to be connoisseurs of painting, they would be in rather a dilemma. For, according to "the social sense of the community," they should fix a higher price for the bad picture than for the great work of art, whereas their own artistic consciences would compel them to the opposite course. We come back to this: that the commercial, as distinct from the artistic, value of a picture is what it will fetch and there is no other possible criterion. Since people can, after all, do without pictures, they will never consent to pay for them more than they are worth to them, in their opinion.

Perhaps Guild Socialists may object to the choice of pictures as an example. It may be that they would exclude works of art from the general rule that prices should be fixed. Then let us take another example, which I choose because it shows very clearly that the only practical criterion of price is supply and demand. In the French department of Côte-d'Or, on the slopes of the hills between Dijon and Chagny, are vineyards covering a relatively small area which produce all the fine red burgundies—Chambertin, Romanée-Conti, Corton, Musigny, Clos-Vougeot, Nuits, Beaune, Pommard,

Volnay and the rest. The total yield of the area is considerably less than 1 per cent. of the total yield of the vineyards of France, and perhaps 15 per cent. of the total yield of Burgundy. No doubt the economic rent of the area in question is higher than that of the other Burgundy vineyards ; otherwise the cost of producing a bottle of Chamber-tin or Corton and the labour involved are no more than in the case of the most ordinary burgundy. The fine quality of the wines grown on the particular area mentioned results from a combination of particular vines with the peculiar qualities of the soil. The same vines have been planted in many other places all over the world, but it has never been possible to produce from them the same wines. What is the "just price" of a bottle of one of these fine burgundies? By what possible criterion could their price be fixed other than that of supply and demand? I hope that there will still be in a Socialist society persons capable of appreciating a Musigny or a Romanée-Conti. Such persons will have to go without something else in order to get a bottle of one of those wines. The price of the wines can depend on nothing else than the number of people that want them and the sacrifices that they are prepared to make to get them.

Fortunately, tastes differ and everybody does not want the same luxuries. A fine burgundy or

claret, for instance, is thrown away on most Englishmen, who prefer anything that is fizzy. But it is only just that people that want luxuries should pay for them. Naturally, the prices of all luxuries will necessarily be much lower in a Socialist society than they are now, when they are kept up by the fact that they are competed for by people with more money than they know what to do with. They will depend on the amount of individual incomes and on the surplus of the respective incomes that remains after the necessities of life have been provided for. Suppose, for example, that the average family income were £500 a year, and nobody had more than £2000—the figures are, of course, quite arbitrary and not intended as a forecast—it would be difficult for anybody to spend on a picture more than £200, the maximum price that Jean-François Millet declared any picture to be worth, and nobody would be likely to give two guineas a bottle for champagne. The better wealth is divided, the more easy will it become for everybody to have some luxury, and the more difficult for anybody to have too many luxuries. As for the necessities of life, there is no reason why their prices too should not be left to the operation of natural causes. The most just price is that determined by supply and demand, since it is in fact determined by the mutual service rendered to each other by the buyer and seller.

A very strong objection to fixing prices is that, so at least it seems to me, it leaves international trade out of account. We shall still import and export in a Socialist society; indeed, it is to be hoped that we shall import and export more than ever, for with the destruction of economic and political frontiers each administrative area will produce only what its natural resources and conditions enable it to produce best and most cheaply. There would be an end of industries artificially maintained by protective tariffs. No particular region would need "key industries" to provide for the case of war. There would, for example, be no need for England to grow wheat at all if it should prove to be the case—I do not say that it would—that enough for the world supply could be grown elsewhere more cheaply than it could be grown in this country. And the fact that no region would be able to supply all its own primary needs would itself make war almost impossible, apart from other measures for preventing it. That is one of the reasons why universal Free Trade is an essential condition of peace. International trade would become very difficult if each country or region fixed its own prices. In a system of Guild Socialism, for instance, the guilds would presumably import and export—that is, they would buy from and sell to individuals or associations in other countries. Those individuals or associations could not be made

to pay the fixed prices. The guild would either have to treat with them on the basis of supply and demand, or do no business with them. It might happen—indeed, nothing could be more probable—that a guild would be obliged to sell to some person or association in France or Germany at a lower price than that fixed for the particular article in this country. That would mean, in effect, a protective duty at the expense of the home consumer, or, if you like, a bounty on exports—it comes to the same thing. Indeed, fixing prices would in itself be a form of Protection, if it were made illegal to sell even below the fixed price, as presumably it would be. Inevitably, we should have guilds demanding the exclusion of imports, or their sale at a higher price than was necessary, in order to keep up the price of the home-produced article. Protection in any form makes internationalism impossible. Free exchange is essential to internationalism and free exchange is incompatible with fixed prices.

It is strange that, whereas Socialism claims to be essentially international, so many proposed Socialist systems seem to assume a self-contained country producing all that it needs. In a strict Communist society, with no buying and selling and no currency, I do not know how international trade would be conducted. Presumably by barter. A return to barter would not be progress, but reaction. In a

centralised system of State Socialism the Government would, no doubt, have a monopoly of import and export trade, but it would have to have some means of paying for what it bought, unless barter were restored. Such a Government would probably be intensely Protectionist, for it would wish to defend its own monopolies from foreign competition, especially as they would probably be grossly mismanaged and doing very badly. A libertarian Socialist society must have a currency, as the Guild Socialists allow. I should hope that we should eventually arrive at an international currency, and very soon at one for the whole of Europe. If there were no currency, presumably, as has been said, incomes would be paid in coupons of certain values, for there must be a standard of value: even if there were no currency, we should have to talk as if there were one. But, unless the coupons were international, nobody would accept them outside the country of issue. And, even if they were international, they would not be convenient means of exchange for international trade, if their validity were of limited duration. If it were not, they would simply be a paper currency. But, of course, international trade is in fact worked by a credit system—by the banks. Credit can be measured only in terms of currency. But there really is no sort of reason for getting rid of currency, since no other method of exchange could possibly

be so convenient. It is for those that propose to get rid of it to give reasons for the proposal.

It may be objected that a man might save up currency and start as an employer of labour. As I have said—and in this regard Guild Socialists agree with me—there is no reason why independent producers should not continue in a Socialist society. A small tradesman, if such survived, or a craftsman or owner of a small workshop, might wish to employ somebody else to help him. But what has already been said about agriculture applies to other industries. Nobody would consent to be employed unless he got at least as good terms as he could get for himself by belonging to a guild or union of workers, or working independently. If a man could find plenty of people willing to be employed, that could only mean that he was able to pay them at least as much as—probably more than—they would earn for themselves as members of a co-operative undertaking. And that would mean that co-operative production was less successful than production under individual control. I believe that co-operative production would hold its own and that it would be very difficult indeed to find anybody willing to be employed by another individual, but, if that be not the case, co-operative production must not be artificially bolstered up.

If it be considered dangerous to allow anybody

that had saved up money to bequeath it, inheritance could be made illegal, except, of course, in the case of personal effects, such as furniture. But the inheritance of money would give nobody any ownership of the means of production; he would inherit only the power of purchasing products. Moreover, incomes are unlikely to be high enough in a Socialist society to leave much room for saving, and the incentive to saving will be gone, because it will have become unnecessary to provide for one's family. People might, of course, lend money at interest, whatever might be the form of currency, but that could be easily discouraged by not enforcing any contract of the kind. If people chose to lend money without any legal means of securing its repayment, or with no means of securing the repayment of more than the principal, that would be their affair and it would hurt nobody.

Such are, very briefly and imperfectly stated, the main lines on which, in my opinion, a libertarian Socialist society should be ordered. It would not remedy all the ills of humanity. Socialism is not a panacea: there are no panaceas except in quack advertisements. It is a great temptation to people enthusiastic in any cause to claim for their particular proposals that they will bring in the millennium, but it is a temptation that should be sternly resisted. Let us take warning by the apostles of democracy and the disillusion that has followed the

discovery that their claims for it were absurdly exaggerated. Socialism is an economic remedy for certain specific economic evils—a remedy resulting naturally from existing conditions. No doubt its effects will be more than merely economic, like those of all other economic changes, but we can form no conception of what those extra-economic effects will be and we had better not indulge in prophecy.

Perhaps England is the European country in which the conditions are most suitable to a Socialist experiment. The proletariat is the great majority of the population and we have the immense advantage of having no peasant proprietors. The industrial and agricultural proletariats have no conflicting interests and, although the latter was until lately sadly neglected by the Trade Unionists, that mistake is now being repaired. The agricultural organisation, however, still needs developing, and it is urgently necessary to combine all the agricultural workers in a single union. The other countries where the conditions are suitable to Socialism are Germany and Italy.

In nearly all the rest of Europe the industrial proletariat is a minority and the peasant proprietors form a solid barrier to Socialism. The danger of the "Green International" is not yet sufficiently recognised. Nor is the danger that a great part of the Continent may lapse into a state of semi-primitive barbarism, in which urban civilisa-

tion is replaced by backward peasant Republics. There is no evidence that a world revolution is imminent. Indeed, the situation in Europe generally is less revolutionary than it was two years ago and in most countries conservatism and reaction are stronger. The appalling conditions of misery and famine existing in several countries seem to have produced passive despair rather than revolutionary feeling; in Poland they are compatible with bellicose Nationalism. Even if, in some of those countries, despair should at last lead to violence, Socialism, if it came, would inherit nothing but ruins.

In any case, it would be a grave error to imagine that a Socialist society will issue ready-made from a revolution due to hunger. "A social order is not brought into being without a long preparation," and, unless that preparation precedes the revolution, the latter "is doomed in advance to defeat and counter-revolution." In the great industrial countries the preparation is already in an advanced stage; in many other countries it is only beginning. The great industrial countries have a special responsibility. It is their duty to help the less advanced countries, and to that end it is essential to maintain the unity of international Trade Unionism and to develop and extend international relations which are at present very imperfectly organised.

No single country could be Socialist while the rest of the world remained capitalist. It is not even certain that the great industrial countries, if they adopted Socialism, could hold their own against hostile peasant Republics, controlling a great part of the world's food supply. In all probability Internationalism must precede Socialism and the latter will not become possible until the former has been achieved. The immediate task of organised Labour is, therefore, to create the Universal Federal Republic and it should set itself to that task independently of the Governments.

The Trade Unions should begin here and now to build up international institutions to replace the bourgeois States. The appointment of Trade Union ambassadors from each country to the others is a project worth considering. The international solidarity of the proletariat will not be realised until industrial action becomes international. No strike should be declared in any country until the organisations in other countries have been consulted and a Labour Diplomatic Service seems necessary to make prompt consultation possible. Had such a service existed in 1914, perhaps the War might have been prevented by a general strike in England, France and Germany. In any case, it is urgently necessary to make plans for such a strike in the event of any future threat of war and to take measures to make the plans effective. The mistake, into which even Jaurès fell, of excepting the case of a "defensive" war must not be repeated. We now know how easy it is for a government to

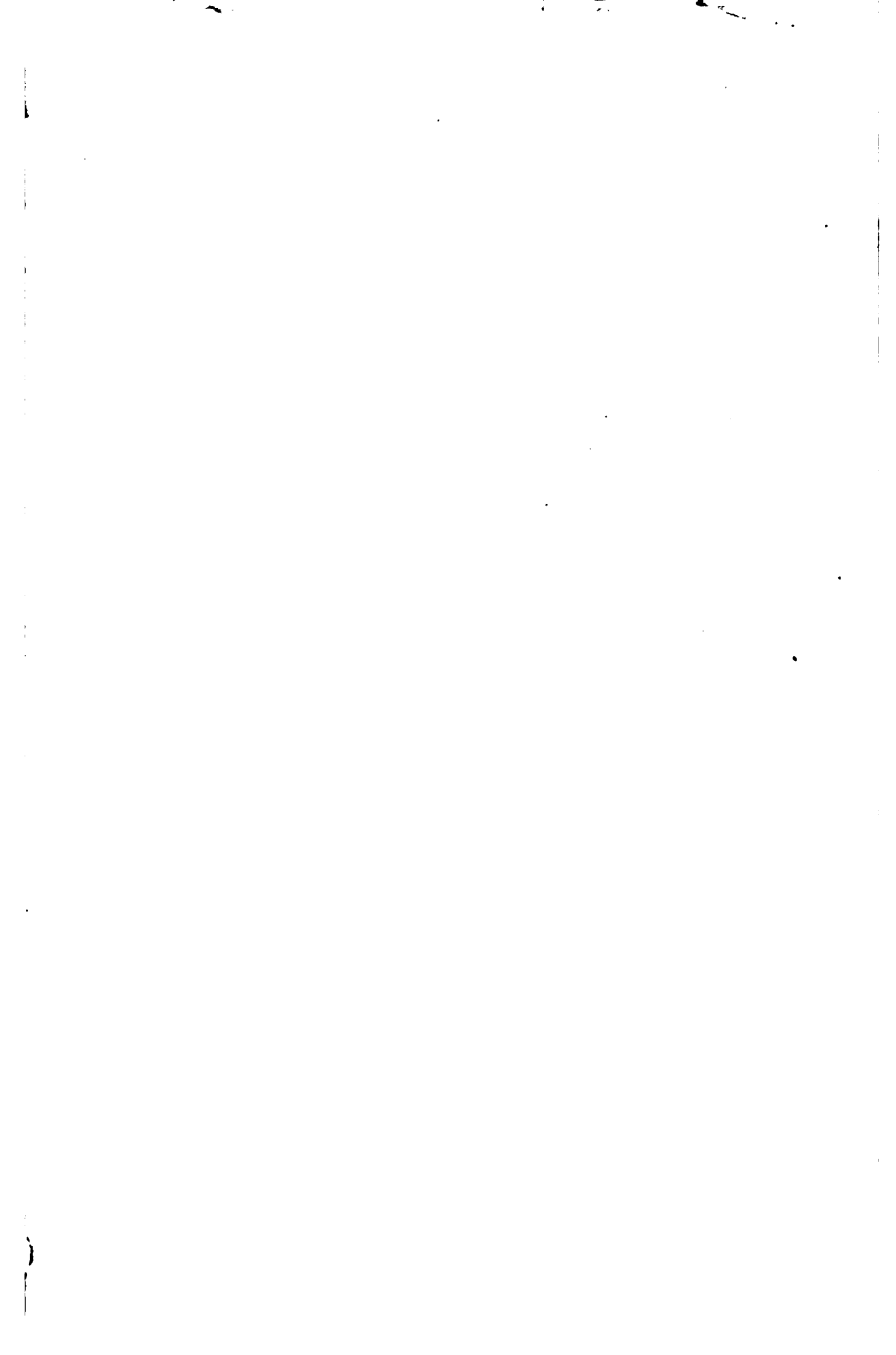
represent any war as being defensive on its part. "Il faut savoir se faire déclarer la guerre," as Frederick the Great said. In 1914 the people of every belligerent country believed that the War was defensive on the part of its own government and in every case the belief was mistaken.

At the same time organised Labour should use political and direct action to get rid of passports, visas, Alien Laws, restrictions of emigration and immigration, and all other hindrances to freedom of communications. Whatever the pretexts alleged for these restrictions, their real purpose is to increase the powers of capitalist governments and to put in their hands a weapon against international action on the part of the proletariat. Organised Labour should take up the defence of personal liberty, which degenerate Liberals have abandoned, and rescue it from the encroachments of the State. It should use direct and political action to obtain, in the words of the resolution unanimously adopted by the International Transport Workers' Congress at Geneva in April 1921, the suppression of all "artificial restrictions, by Protective Tariffs, Embargoes, Controls and Prohibitions, upon the free exchange of commodities between country and country." Universal Free Trade, which is economic internationalism, is the first and most essential step towards making war impossible and international Socialism possible.

Backward countries, such as France, the British Dominions, and the United States of America, will prevent the immediate realisation of universal

Free Trade. England should take the initiative, as Mr Maynard Keynes has proposed, in forming a League of Free Trade Nations. The members of the League should be free, if they please, to impose import duties against countries remaining outside the League, but this freedom need not necessarily be used. England, at any rate, should maintain Free Trade with all countries unless and until the League became powerful enough to force every country to join it by boycotting those that remained outside. For the imposition of import duties is an act of economic war and, in healthy international conditions, will be treated as such. It should also be the aim of organised Labour to scrap all the Peace Treaties and reorganise Europe on the basis of self-determination for all peoples, including Ireland, Austria, Montenegro, the Tyrol, and all the other populations to which the Allied Governments have refused it.

This international preparation for the new social order is the most immediately pressing, but it need not prevent or even postpone preparation within each nation. England, where personal liberty was once prized more highly than in most other countries, has the special duty of pointing the way to a Socialism recognising the truth that from the individual all social organisation must start and to him it must return. For the happiness and the liberty of the individual are the end and aim of all society.



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